DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 024 SO 030 567

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TITLE	Education and Equity in OECD Countries.
INSTITUTION	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Paris (France).
ISBN	ISBN-92-64-15478-7
PUB DATE	1997-00-00
NOTE	129p.; Document contains light type.
PUB TYPE	Opinion Papers (120) -- Reports - General (140)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Access to Education; *Economic Factors; *Educational Policy; *Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary Education; *Foreign Countries; Lifelong Learning; Postsecondary Education; Student Needs
IDENTIFIERS	*Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development; Social Reality

ABSTRACT

Expanding learning opportunities is a major characteristic of Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries. In the new social and economic context those with less education and training are more likely to be left behind. A broad view of education and equity in OECD countries is provide in this report. Challenges and policy orientations are placed in social and economic contexts and key policy principles are delineated. Quality and equity must be addressed simultaneously through consolidated and integrated policy approaches and good practice must be adopted widely in schools and schooling to promote effectiveness. The top priority of a lifelong approach to learning is equality of opportunity within a better resourced initial education providing extensive continuing learning opportunities. Divided into three parts, the report aims to identify emerging principles and orientations for policy development. Part 1 deals with economic, social, and educational developments and emphasizes the importance of the issues under review. Part 2 examines patterns of access and participation in education and training systems, and the policy questions and approaches that arise from them. Part 3 draws together the main implications in a policy orientations statement based on the patterns, arguments, and conclusions. A glossary of commonly used terms and concepts is provided that disentangles the variety of meanings and implications for policy. (BT)

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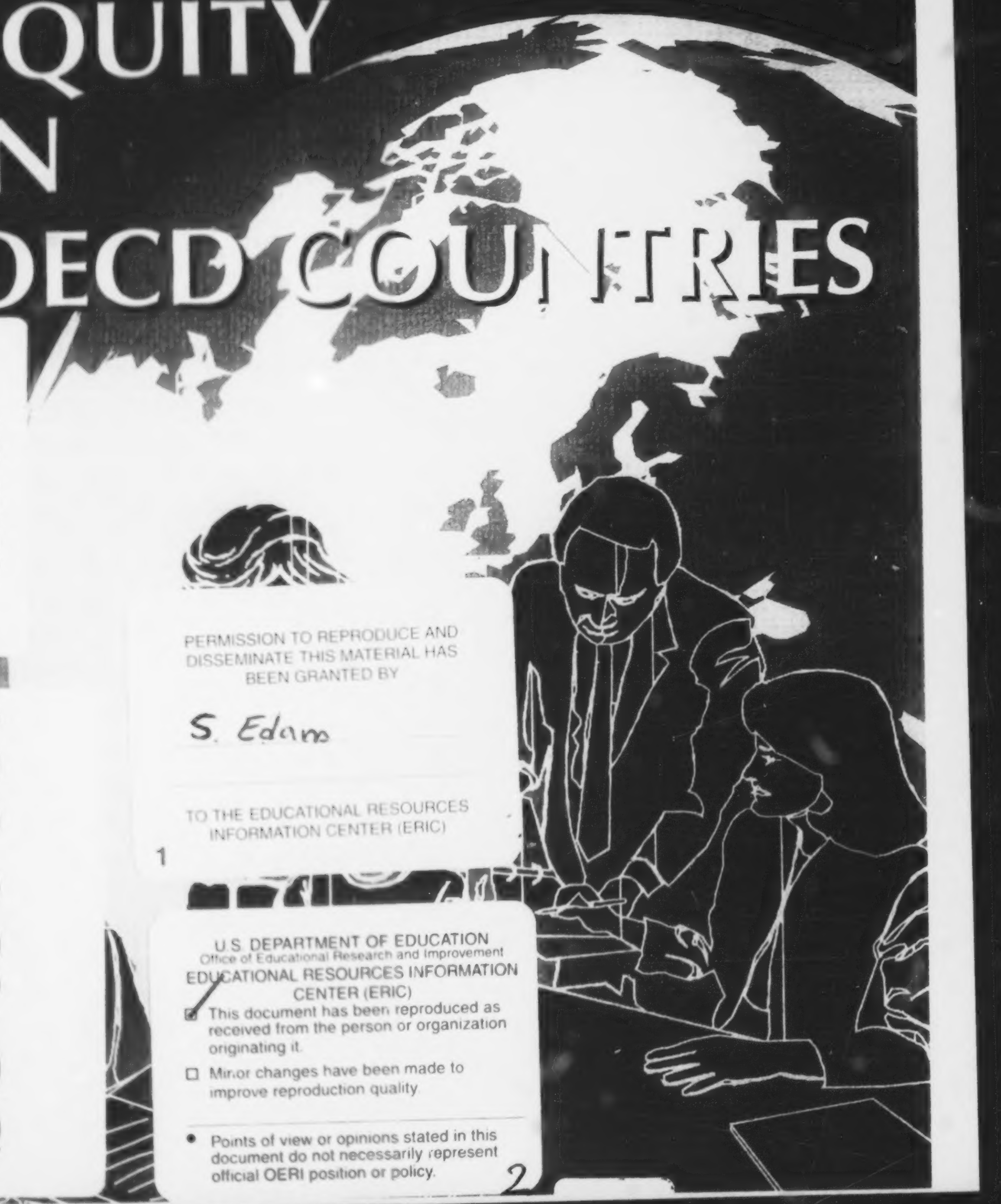

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Education and Equity in OECD Countries

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Publié en français sous le titre :
ÉDUCATION ET ÉQUITÉ DANS LES PAYS DE L'OCDE

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FOREWORD

When OECD Ministers of Education met in 1990, they agreed to endorse the development of "high quality" and "universally accessible" education and training. Their discussion on this subject is the origin of this book whose findings and conclusions contributed to the background analysis for the ministers' most recent meeting under OECD auspices in January 1996. Indeed, in adopting the theme "Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All", ministers again emphasised the importance of promoting learning "for all".

This publication provides a broad review of education and equity in OECD countries, placing the challenges and policy orientations in their social and economic context. Its purposes are to clarify, situate and update current policy thinking, by summarising patterns and developments and giving an elaborated assessment of the main issues now arising. A technical annex provides a glossary of terms and concepts. The book draws on reports and materials submitted by OECD Member countries and expert papers commissioned for this review, as well as on documents and a wealth of other articles and written materials. A draft version of the report was discussed by the Education Committee and at an experts' meeting convened, with support from the US Department of Education and the College Board, in June 1993 in Washington, DC. A revised version of the report was discussed by the Education Committee in late 1993: that version was updated for publication, to take into account additional information and comments from countries.

The publication was prepared by Mr. David Istance, formerly of the Department of Adult Continuing Education, University of Wales, Swansea, United Kingdom, now of the CERI Secretariat in OECD. It is published on the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent formal meetings on education organised by the OECD, Education Ministers stressed issues of access, participation and equity in education and training. Efforts were made to create a broad, conceptual review of patterns and developments in different countries following the ministerial meeting at the end of 1990. The purpose of the review is to clarify, update and situate current thinking in this area and to identify emerging principles and orientations for policy development. This report contains the results of that work.

This book is divided into three parts. *Part One* deals with economic, social, and educational developments and emphasizes the importance of the issues under review (Chapter 1), analyses the socio-economic framework which is so vital to the developing equity issues in education and training (Chapter 2), and addresses the relation between the educational expansion of recent decades and the realisation of equity and equality (Chapter 3). *Part Two* examines patterns of access and participation in education and training systems, and the policy questions and approaches to which these give rise. Chapter 4 concentrates on the compulsory school years, including the pre-school period. Post-compulsory education is addressed in Chapter 5. *Part Three* (Chapter 6) draws together the main implications in a policy orientations statement based on the patterns, arguments, and conclusions. A glossary of commonly-used terms and concepts is situated at the end in a technical annex, which disentangles the variety of meanings and some of their implications for policy.

The report begins by explaining (**Chapter 1**) the importance of all the issues concerning equity, access, and participation in education and training – and in organised learning of all sorts. The priority of these policy aims was confirmed by the OECD Ministers of Education in their last meeting in January 1996, entitled "Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All". The Ministers stressed that this ambitious agenda makes economic sense and is in accord with the dictates of social justice. This economic argument stems in part from the enormous waste of large sections of populations, whether young or older, which are pushed to marginality. It is apart from anything else a gross inefficiency, and is tantamount to "writing off" the many educational resources already expended on these individuals and groups.

Furthermore, accepting widespread marginality exacts an enormous cost on the whole fabric of society, in the immediate as well as the long term, which simply cannot be afforded. Social and moral arguments agree that this is unacceptable and indefensible.

Since educational opportunities are so radically shaped by the social and economic environment, developments in economic structures and working life are of the utmost concern to education authorities throughout OECD countries (**Chapter 2**). Conversely, expectations are again high that through learning, knowledge, and retraining, an imposing set of problems in the economy as well as society in general will be alleviated. Applying such learning to the labour market, far from representing a withdrawal from equity in favour of efficiency, is an integral part of its realisation. Of particular concern in the current social and economic environment is how economic restructuring leaves the least qualified especially vulnerable; the deepening phenomenon of long-term unemployment; the slowing or reversal of trends toward greater income equality; and the co-existence of general affluence alongside dire poverty and rising insecurity and violence. These different interconnected situations are now closely shaped by international and not merely national decisions and movements, giving rise in turn to profound educational challenges as OECD countries are now experiencing net immigration. In spite of an array of worrying trends, a qualified optimism about education's potential has returned in many quarters. This potential is now widely accorded, though accompanied by recognition that there is no panacea for deep-seated problems whose roots lie elsewhere. In concrete terms, the educational world must be able to balance the active confrontation of diverse global challenges while focusing especially on the contribution that only education can make. Unless it focuses on its special contribution, scarce learning resources risk becoming spread even more thinly and chaotically. Equity and efficiency can co-exist, and indeed must.

In terms of trends and developments (**Chapter 3**), expanding learning opportunities stands out as one of the major characteristics of modern OECD countries. And it continues to expand, despite spending cuts and constraints in many countries. However, it has not resolved the challenges and dilemmas of realising a more just society, and in some ways has given rise to new difficulties of its own. Since this single trend directly challenges the equality issue, social differences have narrowed far less than hoped. Though gender differences have significantly narrowed, new forms of male and female inequity have emerged. Promising achievement gains to the traditionally disadvantaged confirms the potential of education and of directed reform to make a significant difference in outcomes and prospects. However, when potential gains become vulnerable to adverse environmental pressures, such as growing and concentrated poverty, they can no longer be regarded as permanent. Though patterns of educational spending are still based on expected inequalities, they have nevertheless helped to improve the distribution, since access to post-compulsory phases has become more universal, and since per student public spending on higher education has relatively decreased. The global trend hides the marked inter-institutional spending, and does not in itself reveal a corresponding narrowing of outcomes.

Since it is again acknowledged that education can make a genuine difference for the less advantaged, the key variables for reform once again become the organisation of schooling, the opportunities available and the culture of learning dominant in the system (**Chapter 4**). Matters at the heart of the learning process, especially teacher-pupil interface and factors shaping that interface, are not routine "internal" school issues above which the equity issue rises, but are instead at the core of realising educational equity. The Ministers of Education in 1996 went even further by stressing the importance of a "quality start" through the initial education and training system at the foundation of the global ambition of lifelong learning. Since many countries have adopted universal structures – common curricula, comprehensive schools – the remaining inequity of chances becomes even more deeply embedded, being hidden within the organisations themselves.

"Soft option" tracks are soon regarded by all concerned, including teachers, parents, and above all the pupils themselves, as a step down, with an immediate diminution of their value. Participation in vocational, and especially pre-vocational, branches at the secondary level is one example of institutionalised differentiation that is all too often seen as tantamount to failure, rather than learning with a different emphasis – which may actually be more attuned to the post-school world. The main policy implication may be to use the mechanisms of policy influence to balance the value and recognition of different learning options, once dead-end tracks have been eradicated. Targeted and compensatory measures have their place, especially where existing opportunities and resources are still markedly unequal but, following the same logic, they may well become much more effective once embedded in the mainstream culture of the system, rather than being regarded as "special" or "additional". Improving quality and effectiveness throughout the system is essential. Realising equity, access, and participation more fully should not be considered a conflicting ambition, but as a cornerstone of the endeavour.

In post-compulsory education and training (**Chapter 5**), the general expansion of opportunities belies more complex developments, some of which stand in the way of realising greater equity. These include the differentiation of standing and perceived value of programmes and tracks in further or higher education and training (though there must be differentiation of learning since standardising education is simply no longer an option); the problematic status of many of the vocational programmes and the continuation of outmoded distinctions between "general", "academic" and "vocational" that may be perceived as differences in quality regardless of founded justifications; the gap between access and full participation produced by unacceptably high non-completion levels in some courses and countries; and the seemingly unofficial universal "law" that learning opportunities for adults tend to be dominated by the already-educated. Here, the development of continuing education and training in explicitly equity terms can serve to redress inequalities which may arise. While many of these programmes have avowedly labour market functions, this does not lessen the aim of meeting equity goals at the same time. This is especially true for enterprise training. In an era of rapid change, the possibilities for and access to learning and re-learning later in life become as much a right of citizenship as learning provided in initial schooling.

The final chapter (**Chapter 6**) draws the different arguments and conclusions together and identifies some of the key principles and orientations which emerge for policy. Each country will incorporate these principles and orientations in its own ways, in light of its culture and traditions:

- Quality and equity go hand-in-hand: effectiveness is characterised by the motivation to learn and re-learn by all, especially those who traditionally are low achievers. Since education disadvantage frequently results from complex and problematic interactions between home and community life, socio-economic standing, and educational factors, policies should aim toward consolidation and integration.
- A key policy challenge is to generalise good practice, especially in places where effectiveness is least in evidence. Teachers are at the core – professional conditions and rewards for those who teach in less favoured areas, subjects and branches are prime targets for policy action.
- Central policy should be directed to promote the creation of genuinely equal opportunities across different branches and institutional settings of education and training.
- A lifelong approach to learning emphasizes a shorter, better resourced, very high quality initial system of education which accords the highest priority to equality of opportunity, with more extensive continuing education opportunities. Within a framework for lifelong learning, equity issues arise with regard to employment-related continuing education and training opportunities as well as initial schooling.
- The continued existence of illiteracy, in its broadest sense, is unacceptable.

Part One

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

CURRENT POLICY PRIORITIES

THE NEED FOR REVIEW

A common lament in educational circles is that the concern seriously to address the problem of educational opportunities for the least advantaged and the vulnerable has weakened over the past fifteen or more years in the face of conservative and efficiency-oriented goals. The aim to improve equity, access, and participation has fallen to more hard-nosed concerns. Numerous examples can be found to support such a view. On the other hand, counter-examples can be produced aplenty, describing a plethora of programmes and policies implemented over the past couple of decades precisely to address the needs of the less advantaged and specific interest groups. It is always true that a generalisation which is reasonably convincing for one country or setting will apply poorly to another.

How have educational perspectives changed over the years, and how have they been shaped by their social and economic environments? What have been education's responses? Are the problems faced and the patterns observed the same as before, suggesting the failure of policy and interventions to make any in-roads, or has there been change? If there is change, does it suggest a renewed or reduced priority for ensuring that the needs of all, especially the least advantaged, are being met in the education and training systems of OECD countries? To what degree are the contrasts between the aims of equity and equality and the more "hard-nosed concerns" over-simplifications? All these questions suggest the value of review.

A review of the work on education by the OECD points out the complexity of inter-relations between the study of equality and real-world national and international developments, and confirms both that the OECD has had a long-standing interest and expertise in this field and that perspectives have indeed changed (Papadopoulos, 1993). Since the earlier blossoming of interest in equity, equality and disadvantage in the 1960s and 1970s, policy treatment of these issues now principally revolves around specific population groups or priority concerns for particular sectors of education and training rather than on seeking a more comprehensive view. At the risk of committing an over-generalisation, whether in OECD countries or in the OECD's own programme of work, policy has taken on a more practical orientation – focusing more on the exchange or review of policies/practices in the field, with less conceptual development perhaps.

However valuable practical exchange may be, it is essential to have a broader picture of the interconnection between the problems of different target populations and understanding them in their social, economic, and cultural contexts. Conceptual and practical approaches are needed, especially in today's rapidly changing world. The risk inherent in the practical approach is neglect of *new* configurations of well-documented patterns of privilege and disadvantage, the emergence of new patterns altogether, and their significance for education and training. As political demands evolve, so accepted notions of need and priority correspondingly alter, and analysis must keep pace. And though many of the educational and socio-economic patterns identified are familiar, the purpose of a synthesis and discussion of developments is to meet the constant need for scrutiny and review. The recent history of policy analysis and its developments are well-known. It is much more difficult to increase awareness in policy circles that equity and equality goals must not sink on the list of priorities.

MINISTERS OF EDUCATION CONFIRM THE PRIORITY

"Education 'for all' implies priority for the educationally underserved." However, the aims to improve access and participation will fall well short unless "access" is access to good quality teaching and provision and "participation" means genuine learning.

At their most recent meeting under OECD auspices in January 1996, Ministers of Education gathered to debate the broad and challenging theme that obviously bears heavily on this exercise: "Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All". The theme expresses an ambitious agenda for action, embodying the conviction that lifelong learning should be widely available "for all", so as to promote equity and equality of opportunity. The use of the term "learning" expresses a broad interpretation of the opportunities in question, not restricted only to those under the umbrella of the formal education system (OECD, 1996).

This broader vision has two sides. It underlines that the aim of realising quality provision for as many as possible, and ideally for all, must bring employment-oriented education and training into the picture. It goes further by pointing out the need collectively to relate all these different learning settings, rather than to take each separately, if strategic responses to today's challenges are to be realised. It also suggests that identifying principles of good practice in particular classrooms, schools, colleges, and training centres will remain individual efforts unless the important next step is taken to clarify how such efforts and principles can be generalised throughout systems so as to become universally available.

At their 1990 meeting, the OECD Ministers of Education identified a number of key problem areas as well as guiding "policy orientations". They re-emphasized the importance of *change*, the central role for learning to maximise the benefits of such change, and the interconnectedness of all the forms of education and training – a very similar focus in fact to the starting point of this report.

> "Ministers recognise that, in the decade ahead, OECD countries will be confronted with new economic, social, and cultural challenges in which knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and exchange will play a central part. The potential contribution of education and training is thus of critical importance; realising it depends on improving the quality, structure, and flexibility of provision so that it can contribute to change as well as adequately respond to external pressures (...). Alongside shortages the unemployment problem remains, though at much higher levels in some OECD countries than others. Continuing poverty gives grounds for concern and young people are among those most 'at risk'. The dangers of socio-economic polarisation must be tackled. Education and training have powerful links with production, the labour market, as well as social well-being. The task for policy is to ensure that education and training play their full part in economic and social progress (...). Initial education and training systems need to be of such universally high quality that all young people secure the foundation of knowledge, skills, understanding, and values to enable their full participation in meeting these different challenges (...). Widespread and flexible opportunities need then to be available to build on that foundation through education and training, formal and non-formal, organised recurrently in accordance with the broad aim of lifelong learning" (OECD, 1992*b*, pp. 31-32).

The Ministers also identified some key policy orientations relevant to the subject of this report. They singled out as particular priorities those who have benefited least from past and existing provision:

> "Education 'for all' implies priority for the educationally underserved: to extend the benefits of education to all makes economic sense as much as it accords with social and educational equity; countries cannot afford to leave large pools of talent untapped. This implies targeting the provision of education and training to the different groups of underserved students and trainees and ensuring that they are given special attention so as to acquire the qualifications that permit full participation in economic and social life; in this, public policy has an especially important role to play. Those with disabilities should have full access to learning opportunities that stretch their talents and broaden social participation. Minority groups will flourish in learning environments that promote both pluralism and equality of opportunity. There is the continual problem of the socially deprived; for these, education and training can make the difference, most promisingly through integrated strategies and local

> partnerships with the other economic, labour market, and social policy partners. Underserved adults deserve special attention, particularly those threatened by unemployment and the already jobless, women 'returners', middle-aged and older adults, and minority workers. For access to be widened so that all may participate on a lifelong basis, different forms of student support and financial entitlements, especially for the disadvantaged student or trainee, should be explored. A universal problem is that those with low initial education attainment levels tend to show little interest in returning to organised learning – participation by adults continues to be dominated by the already-educated. Measures should be taken to encourage all adults actively to learn throughout their lives" (OECD, 1992*b*, pp. 33-34).

"Education 'for all' implies priority for the educationally underserved"

Apart from the specific guidance offered, the main point is the Ministers' clear endorsement that equity, access, and participation are in no way secondary to other policy priorities but instead are integral to them – whether by "others" is meant improving the quality of provision, maintaining and furthering its efficiency, or maximising the contribution of learning to economic, social, and cultural well-being. This is a theme reiterated throughout this report (see OECD, 1996 in the bibliography). It underlines that the value of reform is seriously diminished if it is not principally concerned with the realisation of high quality teaching and programmes for all, especially the weaker sections of the student population. "Soft" options are (at best) "second-best". And, seeking to generalise high quality programmes and effective learning, or the efficient deployment of educational resources, will only fall short of the ideal unless all potential pupils, students, and trainees are encompassed. Systems that leave significant sections of the population poorly educated and untrained can hardly be described as either "good", "relevant", or "efficient". The challenge is for these insights to gain acceptance, not as grand rhetoric but as normal practice.

The more integrated aims for education and training give an ambitious profile to the terms "access" and "participation". It moves the agenda onward from a quantitative perspective, where satisfaction with policy achievements stems from providing access to no matter what form of programme, and where participation is counted in terms of mere attendance, to a qualitative imperative where such access and participation will fall short without good quality teaching and genuine learning.

THE AIMS AND STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report addresses these concerns and complements other OECD activities of similar inspiration. It neither provides a detailed review of policies and programmes aimed at the disadvantaged, nor fully covers all the pertinent statistical and research material from different OECD countries, given the breadth of the field under review. Its aim instead is to compile and discuss empirical developments in the different OECD countries and shed light on the issues that fall under the broad domain of "equity, access, and participation".

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT AS THE STARTING POINT

The economic and social context is essential for discussing equity, access and participation in education and training. Analysing it will not only delineate priorities but will also define the major challenges and problems.

Since the theme "equity, access, and participation" in education and training is exceptionally broad, even by the comprehensive standards of the OECD, it follows that the economic and social developments that deserve attention are extremely broad as well. It is even truer when focusing on many countries which, though they share similar conditions, reveal a very wide variety of trends and traditions. Considering the socio-economic context is, however, essential to the equity aspects of education and training. It defines key aspects of the world of organised learning as well as its influences. The very principles and terms "equity", "access", and "participation" acquire substance when compared to the broader world in which educational practice and policy are located. This chapter can provide only an illustrative overview, some points being more relevant in some countries than in others, though the main sources are cross-national in origin.

This chapter emphasizes that though not all developments hinder the achievement of greater equity, there are features of OECD countries – for instance, the entrenchment of long-term unemployment, the changing occupational structures that have diminished the demands for many low-skill jobs, signs of greater inequality of earnings and income – that can only be regarded as highly problematic. They underline why the issues of equity, access, and participation in education and training are priorities, and pinpoint the expected challenges. The case for strategic action is consequently reinforced.

LEVELS AND PATTERNS OF EMPLOYMENT

In spite of the recent recession, there is currently a rise of economic activity and employment. The fact is that OECD countries are affluent. But the growing insecurity and precariousness that accompany restructuring and weak economic *performance only entrench the situation of the needy and make the way out more tenuous and treacherous. At the same time, the problems of socio-economic vulnerability have become more generalised throughout the population – for women and men, young and old. Particular emphasis needs to be given to provision that permits re-learning and retraining among populations at all ages.*

As many OECD economies are presently in the midst of weak recovery from recession, it is easy to forget that throughout the 1980s, average annual OECD GDP growth was remarkably similar to that of the 1970s, taking all countries in aggregate. For the period 1982-90, OECD GDP was significantly higher than the previous decade at 3.3 compared with 2.8 per cent. By the end of the 1980s, however, European economies began faltering and in the early 1990s Scandinavia and Oceania also experienced new and serious drops in GDP. By 1992, annual growth had fallen to 1 per cent for the European countries as a whole, and 1.0 per cent for OECD countries. Since 1992, economic performance has improved such that for 1996, the growth rate for the OECD area was expected to reach 2.7 per cent. Despite the somewhat weaker performance in Europe and accounting for normal changes for all countries over a period of years, there is a general picture of *growth* (as measured by the economic units of national accounts). Overall, there has not been long-term economic decline in a quantitative sense, though of course the slowing down of growth hit certain industries, regions, and sections of the population particularly hard (OECD, 1993*a*, Table 1.1 and OECD, 1992*a*).

Even the employment numbers were not as low as might be expected, for while there was some evidence of decline, such falls were neither consistent nor universal. Indeed, the more dominant pattern across OECD countries shows a continuing *rise* in employment numbers. They grew on an average annual basis of 1 per cent for European countries, and slightly less at 0.9 for EU members, while standing at 1.0 per cent for OECD countries as a whole between 1982 and 1990. Signs of faltering appeared around 1991 with zero employment growth. The 1992 figures were significantly worse – drops of 1.0, 1.2 and 0.1 for the European OECD region, EU countries, and all OECD countries respectively (OECD, 1993*a*, Table 1.2). Although improvements could be noted by 1994, overall employment growth for 1996 was expected to reach 1.1 per cent (OECD, 1995*b*, Table 1.2). Such global aggregates mask important national variations, and hide those which are more regional or local in origin. Moreover, to examine how such employment figures match against job demand, it is essential to compare them with the details of the relevant labour force. The employment figures themselves are nevertheless a reminder that the harsh reality of unemployment and the economic uncertainty of the recent recession are consistent with continued economic activity, even aggregate prosperity.

STRUCTURAL AND OCCUPATIONAL CHANGE

The trend in the structure of employment towards services and away from manufacturing is very broad and familiar, with many rather than any single consequence for education and training. Service jobs cover a wide range, from the most knowledge-intensive to low-status domestic work. It is the speed of this transformation – one crucial feature of the nature of structural change – that leaves those with only initial training and occupational experience in a single field vulnerable, and especially older workers in declining sectors. What is clear is the trend itself:

> "The broad pattern of industrial change continued in the 1980s. The overall proportion of employment represented by the services sector rose from 57 per cent in 1980 to 62 per cent in 1988. While in 1970, only the North American countries had recorded levels of over 60 per cent, eight countries reached this range by 1980 and twelve by 1988. The United States proportion was then over 70 per cent, while in Western Germany and Japan it remained under 60 per cent. To some extent, this growth reflected the practice of contracting out service-type activity from firms in the manufacturing sector to firms in business services which saw a particularly rapid expansion over the period" (OECD, 1991*a*, p. 44).

More recent figures update this general story by showing that the trends have continued. In 1991, growth rates in agriculture were –2.4 for OECD countries as a whole, and –2.9 for the European part, though they did rise by 1.0 per cent in North America at the time. Industry employment fell in all three blocs of countries (with percentage changes of –2.5, –1.8, and –4.6 respectively); while service employment continued to increase in 1991, albeit in modest fashion. Service employment went up in 1991 by between 0.3 and 1 per cent, depending on the countries in question (OECD, 1993*a*, Table C).

OECD labour market analyses point to a more detailed aspect of this broad development and confirm that the service sector (taken as a whole in OECD Member countries) is less able to play a compensatory role for manufacturing decline than in the past. As service employment becomes more widespread, so do the patterns and pressures afflicting other sectors. As expressed in the *1992 Employment Outlook*: "Therefore, it would appear that while workers in manufacturing and construction continue to face a higher risk of unemployment than workers in services, the recent recession has had a broader and deeper impact on service activities than previous recessions" (p. 12).

To the sectoral and industrial analysis of change can be added the complementary focus on occupations and skill-levels. The general classifications beg many questions about actual skill levels in jobs, and many "higher" occupational categories reflect social convention and bureaucratic diploma-driven hiring practices as much as any "true" demand for skills. Yet such questions become mere academic observations to those with poor qualifications (or none at all) who are in fierce competition for available work with skilled workers. The general shift to white-collar employment is only one indicator of the changes taking place; as a summary statistic, however, it is revealing of the narrowing band of opportunities for those traditionally destined for the less-skilled end of the job spectrum. OECD analyses confirm this trend as major and widespread:

> "(...) there has been a fundamental change in the occupational structure of the work force over the last two decades. In 1970, blue-collar workers accounted for a greater proportion of the labour force than white-collar workers in just over half of the OECD countries. Within ten years, the situation had been reversed, and by 1990 white-collar occupations out-numbered blue-collar jobs in all countries except Spain" (OECD, 1992*a*, p. 12).

As with patterns for sectoral change, the more that white-collar jobs became the norm so did the economic recession hit these occupations more profoundly than before, when they were relatively buffered from the rough passages of economic activity. This suggests the need for close attention to the actual impact of such changes. The trend away from manual and lower-skill work places those with low educational attainment, and with skills little in demand, in a particularly vulnerable position. At the same time, "if, as appears to be the case, an increasing number of workers are being displaced from clerical and administrative jobs, then different types of counselling and training may be required to help them find jobs" (OECD, 1992*a*, p. 14). It is not enough to advocate "more" education and training as a global response on the assumption that clerical services and knowledge-intensive occupations have an indefinite capacity for expansion. The "matching" of labour supply and demand is a more subtle and complex task than such advocacy assumes.

It is also important to take into account the nature of the employment available as well as its sectoral composition. A growth of insecure jobs, with poor protection and associated benefits (including the benefits of training opportunities), may offset any general trend towards more knowledge-based, high-skill work, with the already disadvantaged rendered even more vulnerable. There is certainly evidence of increasing non-standard forms of work: the number and diversity of non-standard jobs rose, part-time schedules grew in nearly all countries (closely related to growing female participation rates in paid work), and temporary work increased in some countries. The number of foreign workers in temporary and seasonal work has increased in the OECD area. In fact, the 1991 OECD *Employment Outlook* confirms that the data depict an even more precarious employment situation, albeit with the customary cautiousness:

> "Over the decade there was a sustained debate around two inter-related themes; 'precariousness', or the possible decrease in the security of employment, and the 'flexibility' of the labour market, or its ability to adapt to change.

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> The type of evidence on non-standard forms of working [referred to above] is clearly relevant to the first question. For many countries there is good evidence of an increase in the two most common forms of non-standard working: part-time employment and self-employment. Neither can be necessarily assumed to be precarious. However, in parallel with the total increase there does seem to have been an increase in the absolute numbers of part-timers working 20 hours or less. These part-timers are more likely to be without job security. Again, over the decade the composition of the self-employed population has changed and the proportion of women and young people has increased. Since these groups are relatively vulnerable on the labour market, this might also indicate increased precariousness. For temporary employment, where there is no permanent employment contract, the prima-facie supposition of precariousness is stronger. There appears to be evidence of a rapid rate of increase in some forms of temporary working in a few countries. However, the overall number of temporary workers remains a small proportion of total employment in many others. Finally, the evidence for assessing a possible growth in other forms of non-standard working, such as concealed employment or home-based employment, is clearly lacking.
>
> Of course, conclusions about precariousness cannot be settled simply by reference to non-standard forms of working, since it is possible that an increase in precariousness might occur without any overt changes in forms of working, simply as a result of changes in employer policy" (OECD, 1991*a*, p. 53).

Filtering out the implications of all these developments is not easy. There is now a higher premium on educational attainment and on skill renewal and updating. But it might also herald the declining potency of educational qualifications themselves as a hedge against insecurity. Added precariousness puts a different slant on the determination of the sociological notion of "life-chances" (which are an amalgam of all the socio-economic benefits that go to determine an individual's welfare and lifestyle) insofar as such chances can only be gauged accurately *post-hoc* rather than closely predicted from early access to advantage or its lack.

High initial levels of educational attainment certainly help in today's changing world but are no guarantee of security. It might therefore be interesting to look closely at those aspects of education that are most effective in promoting the ability to cope with change and uncertainty (though it is always possible that the result of such attention might be to promote these abilities in pupils and students already advantaged in other ways). Greater precariousness and uncertainty suggest that re-learning and retraining among the population at all ages should be particularly emphasized. Importance should be placed on openness to new learning, recurrent education, and continuing training rather than fashioning equity and access arguments as though the initial phase of education and training is paramount.

THE GENDER ISSUE

Among the most pronounced employment changes are the rapidly growing female participation rates in paid work, which have far-reaching consequences for the nature of the labour market, patterns of social life, and levels of family income. By 1993, female labour force participation rates had risen to over 70 per cent in four of the 21 OECD Member countries for which data were available, and between 60 and 70 per cent in another eleven countries (OECD, 1995*b*, Table K). The equity implications of these global developments are various. Paid work can of course represent a route to economic independence and liberation from domesticity, though many working women would attest that one is not a necessary consequence of the other. It can also mean experiencing the same forms of workplace drudgery and exploitation that have traditionally been the fate of a large section of the workforce, male or female. Employment discrimination and occupational segregation have been of special concern in recent years, and is now reinforced by the finding that the narrowing of male/female earnings differentials, a positive if modest trend in the past, has slowed considerably:

> "For most OECD countries there was a significant rise in this ratio [female to male hourly earnings of manual workers in manufacturing industries] over the 1970s which partly coincided with the introduction of equal pay legislation in a number of countries. However, by the late 1970s this trend had slowed or come to a halt in a number of countries (including Australia, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) and by the late 1980s earnings differentials were still considerable" (OECD, 1991*a*, p. 55).

Added to this are the long-established differences between men and women in such matters as tenure, security, and type of work. The unweighted average tenure difference between men and women for the countries with data records is nearly three years (9.8 years compared with 7.1) (see OECD, 1993*a*, p. 122). The female share of part-time work is typically between two-thirds and nine-tenths (OECD, 1995*b*, Table E). Although there has been a trend toward a more even balance, women represent the majority of all "discouraged" workers in OECD countries, and the very large majority in some (*ibid*., p. 46, Chart 2.1).

In spite of the obvious trends towards their increasing access to and participation in education, girls and women in general (see next chapter) are thereby experiencing a stark disparity between their educational attainments and labour market outcomes. A common stance among those familiar with the unbudging nature of labour markets is to allege that changes in gender balances come primarily from teacher and not employer practices. While future progress remains important, major changes have in fact already occurred in the educational world. This implies that educational and training reform, though necessary, is not sufficient to address gender inequalities whose roots lie stubbornly in the structure of socio-economic opportunities. Expecting root-and-branch reform to derive from educational change is to risk the same disappointment of 1970s' social reformers who sought a significant narrowing of income and occupational differences through educational expansion.

Indeed, the structural changes outlined in this chapter have recast the gender issue. Alongside the female disadvantages already cited, diminishing primary and industrial employment and opportunities for low-skilled work have with particular force hit *the poorly qualified, especially young males and older men threatened with or experiencing redundancy*. Traditional "male" technical qualifications have often proved inadequate in the face of these changes. The gender issue is therefore to be understood less in terms of generalised female disadvantage and more in terms of the structured and particular problems faced by large sections of both the female and male populations.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Due to the magnitude and persistence of unemployment, some of the starkest labour market developments are considered relevant to this report. Despite a slower growth in the 1990s in the size of the labour force – the base from which unemployment estimates derive when set against job numbers – unemployment grew again to a worrying degree. In 1991, an additional 3 million people or more joined the ranks of the unemployed, bringing the OECD area total to over 27 million. The same occurred again in 1992 when the number of unemployed reached over 30 and a half million. By 1994, in spite of a modest recovery in some countries, unemployment in the OECD area numbered nearly 30 million. Australia, Finland and New Zealand reached post-war record levels of unemployment at over 10 per cent. The cross-country distribution of the growing blight of unemployment was, however, not even. In Southern Europe (Italy, Portugal, Spain), which has traditionally suffered among the highest incidence of unemployment in the OECD area, the 1990 levels were similar (average 14.1 per cent) to those in the mid-1980s (*e.g.* 13.6 per cent in 1987). Elsewhere, unemployment in 1994 remained higher than at the turn of the decade: 2.9 per cent in Japan, over 2.1 per cent in 1990; 6.0 per cent in North America, over 5.7 in 1990; 10.2 average percentage unemployment in Nordic countries, compared with only 2.9 in 1990; 9.4 from 7 per cent in Australia and New Zealand combined; and 9.2 per cent in 1992 in Western Europe compared with 6.9 four years earlier (OECD, 1995*b*, Tables L and M).

As with previous periods of rising unemployment, young people seeking to establish a foothold in the job market are hit especially hard. Youth unemployment rose particularly in those countries and areas suffering most from the general growth in joblessness.

While there was some improvement during the recent recovery, unemployment rates for 15 to 24 year-olds in 1994 remained above their 1990 levels, in those countries which supplied the requisite data: Australia (16.2 from 13.2), Canada (16.5 from 12.7), Finland (30.9 from 6.4), France (27.5 from 19.1) Japan (5.5 from 4.3) New Zealand (15.0 compared with 14.1), Sweden (16.6 from 3.8), the United Kingdom (16.2 and 10.1), and the United States (12.5 from 11.1 per cent in 1990) (see OECD, 1995*b*, Tables B and P). Norway is the exception: the youth unemployment rate stood at 7.0 per cent in 1994, down from 9.0 per cent in 1990.

While it is a mistake to consider the unemployment experience more bearable for older adults than youngsters, or to blame initial education and training systems for high jobless youth figures, the pertinence of these figures resides in the fact that compulsory education is more apt to deal with youth unemployment than with older adult joblessness. The early experience of joblessness is critical because, even though such figures include some who (in any era) carefully seek to become established in a certain field, they also include some whose initial experience on the labour market is so difficult that it precludes the development of skills, values, and experience needed for later progress. Irrespective of whether or not education can create jobs, one is forced to ask what young people acquire from their initial education and training in terms of the knowledge, skills, qualifications, attitudes and values necessary for work life, including the experience of unemployment. If the answer for many is "not much", then serious questions must be asked about what initial education and training offer, notwithstanding the best efforts of teachers, trainers, and administrators.

The high incidence of long-term joblessness is now a phenomenon of the most worrying kind, and closely related to a plethora of social and economic issues, including poverty. Even in the measured terms of the *Employment Outlook*, the OECD is forthright in addressing this question:

> "Long-term unemployment (LTU) is one of the most important labour market phenomena of the decade. Although in most countries unemployment rates were usually about 2 to 3 percentage points on either side of those at the beginning of the decade, the share of the long-term unemployed generally increased by well over this amount in all countries, except Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and the United States. The incidence of LTU varied widely among countries. It was highest in the European countries – about 50 per cent or more – and generally lowest in North America and the Scandinavian countries – roughly under 10 per cent by 1989. Japan and Australia were in the middle range at about 20 per cent, as was Denmark" (OECD, 1992*a*, p. 67).

Other analyses have addressed an issue of particular relevance to this report, namely the educational attainment of the long-term unemployed. The number of countries for which data permit comparisons is relatively few, but the conclusion reached was clear:

> "Thus, in these countries, the data are consistent with the argument that relatively lower educational attainment – particularly for those who have not completed upper secondary education – with respect to the pool of unemployed may lead to a drift into long-term unemployment (...). The data also show that there has been a slight shift towards long-term unemployment affecting individuals with higher educational attainment" (OECD, 1993*a*, p. 92).

THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH, INCOME, AND WELFARE

Although there has been a long-term decline in wealth inequality, income inequality has recently become more pronounced in certain countries. In some, the cause is the bottom losing ground. In others, the top has gained a relative advantage. Analyses of social mobility do not suggest that OECD countries share a long-term trend towards greater openness. While education is not a solution to poverty, there is currently more credence given to the potency of education to address the handicaps of deprivation and to the broader importance of "social capital".

Long-term unemployment contributes greatly to the incidence of poverty, but the structures and values that underpin the fundamental characteristics of countries in their distribution of wealth, income, and welfare do not have a single cause. Much also depends on the nature of distribution and redistribution under scrutiny; a significant redistribution of a country's wealth between, say, the top quintile and the next may reveal a certain increasing accessibility to power and privilege but it says very little about the life chances of the bottom quintiles. No single indicator can summarise all relevant distributional characteristics. Indeed, the most recent studies of income and earnings inequality by the OECD emphasize precisely that the changes that have occurred in these distributions reflect different sources; in some countries, it translates into improving or declining rewards for the lower groups, in others, changes at the top of the distribution (OECD, 1993*a*, Chapter 5; Atkinson, Rainwater, and Smeeding, 1995).

There has been a very long-term trend towards the decline in *wealth inequality* with important implications in OECD countries, though little for the poor and very poor:

> "Perhaps the most important finding is the gradual but persistent decline in the degree of wealth inequality among households during the twentieth century. This observation is based on data for Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the only countries for which such long time-series information is available (...). It is interesting to note that these three countries differ quite considerably in tax policy, the extent of social transfers, macroeconomic performance, and in other social and political institutions (...). Despite this significant downward trend in inequality, household wealth is still highly concentrated today. In the mid-1970s, the richest 1 per cent held a quarter of all

household wealth in France and the United States, over 30 per cent in the United Kingdom, and about a sixth in Sweden. Moreover, household wealth is considerably more concentrated than household income. Greenwood, for example, calculated that the top 1 per cent of wealth holders owned 20 per cent of total wealth in the United States in 1973, while the richest 1 per cent of families with regard to income received 11 per cent of all income" (Wolff, 1987, pp. 1-2).

Of more immediate relevance are changes in the *distribution of income and earnings*, which – consistent with other socio-economic indicators referred to in this chapter – have bleak aspects for the achievement of equity:

> "If we start with the decile ratio, we see that this increased in Australia, Belgium, Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It remained essentially unchanged in France and Canada, and fell in New Zealand. In broad terms, this summarises the picture that will emerge throughout this section. The majority of countries covered here show a rise in inequality, particularly the United States and the United Kingdom, but this was not universal. There is diversity of experience across countries (...). The pattern of change has its distinctive features in each of the countries [confirming the point emphasised in the introductory paragraph to the section]. Among the countries where inequality increased:
>
> - in the United States, Finland, and, to a lesser extent, Australia, the lower percentiles lost relative to the median and the upper percentiles gained;
> - in the United Kingdom, there was over this period, less change at the bottom but the upper percentiles (including the upper quartile) rose substantially relative to the median;
> - in Netherlands and Sweden the lower percentiles fell relative to the median, but there was less change at the top" (Atkinson, Rainwater and Smeeding, 1995).

In the 1993 OECD *Employment Outlook*, a chapter analyses the somewhat more specific concept of earnings inequality which confirms a similar picture: the 1980s were not positive in certain countries with regard to the diminution of socio-economic differences. The United Kingdom and the United States are again cited as experiencing the most apparent trend towards greater inequality. In the cross-sectional comparisons described below, the United States also stands out as a country with comparatively high levels of inequality, in addition and as opposed to the evidence on trends. However, such comparisons depend heavily on the existence of national data, which are unfortunately far from complete. The 1993 *Employment Outlook* clearly describes the direction trends have taken:

> "Trends in the inequality of earnings in the 1980s differed from those of the 1970s. While the 1970s generally saw decreasing or stable inequality, the 1980s

> were marked by increases in twelve of the seventeen countries for which information was available for the preparation of this chapter. These increases were generally small except in the United Kingdom and the United States. (In the United States, inequality had also risen in the 1970s, but at a much slower pace.) In the remaining five countries, the degree of inequality was roughly stable, but often contrasted with declines in the 1970s. The only one of the seventeen countries where inequality continued to fall was Germany" (OECD, 1993*a*, p.157).

International comparisons of income inequality have been dogged by substantial differences of measures, data, and samples. However, the Luxembourg Income Study (Atkinson, Rainwater and Smeeding, 1995) sought to overcome many of these data problems, thereby permitting comparisons of the United States, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Israel, Germany (pre-reunification), Norway, and Sweden [see Smeeding in Osberg, 1991, and more recently Atkinson, Rainwater, and Smeeding, 1995]. Even with more comparable data, there are various measures of income inequality which, when adopted, can make a significant difference. The reported results nevertheless refer only to the countries listed; including others countries would doubtless have modified any conclusions on relative equality and inequality. Despite such caveats, a number of findings appear to be reliable.

Of the ten countries referred to above, no matter which measure is used (Atkinson or Theil inequality indices, or Gini coefficient), or whether it is disposable family income alone or adjusted to an "adult equivalence" scale, the United States emerges as the most unequal in its income distribution: many poor coexist with the many affluent. In comparing the percentages of persons in these two categories of richest and poorest (Atkinson, Rainwater and Smeeding, 1995), the United States is on the top of both lists for the ten countries.

In describing the "policy environment" for the 1988 meeting of OECD Social Policy Ministers, the documentation counterposed descriptions of "new affluence" with the contrasting development of "long-term dependency". Their coexistence has already been highlighted as a key aspect of the socio-economic context. "New affluence" refers to the current wider availability of discretionary income than, say, half a century or even thirty years ago. The OECD social policy report observes that "an affluence which extends to 40 per cent of the population rather than 4 or 10 per cent may have significant implications for the roles of state and private resources in the purchase and financing of 'social' transfers and services" (OECD, 1988*b*, p. 20). But alongside the "better-off" are the "very poor" and those in long-term dependency, which the Ministerial documentation went so far as to describe (*op. cit.*, p. 21) in terms of exclusion:

> "Recent years have seen a growth of concern in many countries about those who remain excluded from the patterns of opportunity and mobility which are

> among the important characteristics of open societies and dynamic economies. The terms used to describe this group vary – persistent poverty, welfare dependency, and the 'underclass' are three examples, each reflecting slightly different interpretations of the problem. However termed, the concern is generally not so much with those whom the welfare state fails to reach but rather those who are, so to speak, within the system – receiving income support, housed under public responsibility, with children attending state schools – but whose prospects seem little better than subsistence dependency, without an active role in society."

The analysis concludes that arguments over whether the term "underclass" is appropriate or indeed whether its existence should be understood as something new or long-standing, is a matter for debate, but does not alter the hard realities. What is important is that the process of economic restructuring described in the previous sections has tended to close off the expansion of, and access to, the opportunities that were offered in the earlier part of the post-war period. As such, it fundamentally affects the realisation of equity, access, and participation in educational as well as in critical socio-economic terms. In this sense, old problems acquire new aspects in most OECD countries. It was "a matter of concern" for the Social Policy Ministers that a significant number of people are now dependent on low incomes for long periods (including the long-term unemployed discussed above) and that "(...) income support mechanisms sometimes function in such a way as to create so-called poverty traps which, by minimising the net gain from any employment income, may reinforce this dependence" (*op. cit.*, p. 21).

Over a longer time scale, cross-national, through-time comparisons of social mobility rates provide little comfort. Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) examined these comparisons to test the "liberal theory" according to which industrial societies display more mobility and openness than pre-industrial ones, and which asserts that as industrialisation proceeds, opportunity structures become more favourable and social selection processes more universal. "In the main, the results that we have reported in this study fail to support these claims of the liberal theory, and indeed go contrary to them to a degree that must bring the general cogency of the theory into serious doubt" (p. 367).

For the poor, and *poverty levels* in particular (here defined as those with adjusted incomes below 0.5 median income), it is not surprising to find approximately the same patterns as those for overall distributions:

> "With respect to overall poverty in general, and child poverty in particular, the countries fall into roughly four groups: the Scandinavians (Norway, Sweden) and Germany with the lowest poverty rates, near 0 per cent overall and lower for persons in two parent (couple) families with children. These are followed by the Swiss and Dutch in the 8 per cent range but still below the overall average rate of 10.1 per cent. Slightly above average are the third group: the Canadians,

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Israelis, Australians, and the United Kingdom, all in the 10-11 per cent range. The United States has by far the highest rate at 16.6 per cent" (Smeeding in Osberg, 1991, p. 47).

International data identify more precisely those sections of the population most likely to fall into one or another category. They conform with other national-level findings as well as more anecdotal evidence. Childless couples are below average in their membership of the very poor, while single-parent families have relative poverty rates at least three times as high, and up to eight to ten times as high, as people living in married-couple families. And whereas for a long time the elderly were numerous among the very poor, a dramatic situation reformed through post-war pension policies (see OECD, 1988*b*), Luxembourg data allow a more nuanced picture to emerge (see Atkinson, Rainwater and Smeeding, 1995). It suggests that the least well-off groups cannot be categorised as young or old; children in single parent families among the young and elderly women among the old are more likely to be relatively poor and/or disadvantaged than are other groups. Instead of contrasting the situation of young and old, a more apt contrast might well be the dichotomy between women (young and old) and men (young and old). It is a reminder that the gender dimension is complex, and that the most intractable aspects of female disadvantage may be more apparent in relation to the severe problems of poverty than in the more conventional educational and labour market participation data.

The role of education and training in combating poverty has long been controversial. Few would suggest that they can seriously dent the major socio-economic forces and structures that underpin poverty. Smith and O'Day (1991), while arguing for education policy action, concur that direct intervention is likely to be much more effective than indirect means: "A major income redistribution program which would eliminate poverty and provide reasonable housing for all families with young children would go a long way toward improving educational opportunity. If we thought there was any chance that such action would occur in the next decade it would be at the top of our list." But there is now a more optimistic view of the potential role of education. Earlier evaluations of compensatory programmes that appeared to show little impact have since been subject to more positive assessments. This has come through identifying more accurately the particular programmes and features that show lasting effects rather than by assuming that it is a matter of "all-or-nothing". It derived from questioning the scale of effects considered significant – earlier assessments tended to dismiss modest change as insignificant. There is also greater understanding that the impact of any programme or policy for a particular age group, no matter how valuable in itself, will fade unless reinforced and built on through later positive learning experiences in education, training, work, and the community (Chapter 4 treats these questions in more detail).

The directions of influence are not one-way. Educational achievement is as surely dented by serious disadvantage as disadvantage has some of its roots in poor learning experiences. James Coleman, famous for his 1966 study of equality of educational opportunity in the United States, more recently gave prominence to the notion of "social capital" as an additional factor to either financial or human capital in explaining this nexus of relationships, and indeed in helping to shape the other two. It is different from Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital", residing in the norms and networks of social communities large and small. He points to the single-parent family, not only as a major correlate of poverty, but as a frequent source of inadequate social capital. Without evident signs of family breakdown, he notes however that:

> "Even if adults are physically present, there is a lack of social capital in the family if there are not strong relations between children and parents. The lack of strong relations can result from the child's embeddedness in a youth community, from the parents' embeddedness in relationships with other adults that do not cross generations, or from other sources. Whatever the source, it means that whatever human capital exists in the parents, the child does not profit from it because the social capital is missing (...). The social capital that has value for a young person's development does not reside solely within the family. It can be found outside as well in the community consisting of the social relationships that exist among parents, in the closure exhibited by this structure of relations, and in the parents' relations with the institutions of the community" (Coleman, 1988, pp. S111, S113).

This analysis is suggestive rather than definitive; it warns that an excessive reliance on the descriptive correlates of disadvantage – single parenthood, class or educational background of the parents – risks missing the explanatory factors that actually lie behind the descriptive categories. For policy purposes, what may be most important to note is the presence or absence of communities, support structures, and norms that underpin positive attitudes to education and learning. As Coleman suggests, it may well be less the fact of young single parenthood, for example, that determines whether children and young people are "at risk" but the conditions of isolation and hardship that so often accompany it. In short, the notion of "social capital" switches the focus to a more social and analytical optic rather than an individual and descriptive perspective.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS AND MOVEMENTS

Rapidly changing patterns of international movements are bringing new tensions and educational challenges. All OECD countries are now places of net immigration. Socio-economic problems are often concentrated in foreign communities,

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though not in all cases or to similar degrees. Educational issues concern socio-economic conditions, language and culture, and racism.

Complex and catastrophic international developments such as the collapse of the African Sub-Saharan economies or the Balkan crisis cannot be treated here. Instead, the theme is more modestly drawn around the international movements of workers and peoples on which the OECD has done extensive analysis in recent years. Yet as the 1992 SOPEMI report notes at the outset, global subjects relate closely to more specific migratory ones: "The reasons for the acceleration of migratory movements in 1990 and 1991 may be sought primarily in the persisting demographic and economic imbalances between North and South, and the political changes of Central and Eastern Europe" (OECD, 1992*c*, p. 11). There has been a general recent increase in international migratory movements, already noticeable in the mid-1980s and clearer at the beginning of the 1990s. These analyses stress that there is no single trend in evidence: in some countries, such as the United States, Canada, and Australia, family migration is a major source of new arrivals; in European OECD countries, there has been a complex mix of asylum seekers in search of new citizenship, labour immigration, and family reunification.

Contemporary migratory movements can be typified as moving towards both a "globalisation" and a "regionalisation". The "globalisation" refers to the trend in which all continents and world regions are involved in the flows of migration, bringing in relatively new nationalities to certain OECD countries. Despite the diversity of patterns and flows, certain characteristics are common, and alongside the traditional emigration flows of permanent workers and their families, and of students and trainees, there are temporary and seasonal workers, frontier workers, asylum seekers, and illegal migrants. The "regionalisation" of migration may seem to describe something contradictory to global developments, but in fact alongside the broader movements has been a strengthening of certain regional patterns. Free trade areas provide a clear focus for this (EU, EFTA, NAFTA, and with negotiations underway at time of drafting to create new trade zones in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe as well). In addition, there are long-established bilateral traditions of migration and settlement such as between Mexico and the United States, and the Algerian and Turkish communities in France and Germany respectively. Alongside previous intra-OECD migration (such as between South and North Europe), there are now significant flows between non-Member and Member countries, and more in one direction than the other:

> "Remarkably, over the decade, virtually all OECD countries became countries of net immigration. The southern European countries (notably Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain) received major flows of migrants from developing countries, from the middle of the decade onwards" (OECD, 1991*a*, p. 30).

A caveat to these analyses is that they are primarily concerned with migrants and immigrants, rather than with ethnic groups of longer standing or indeed indigenous populations. They do not address, therefore, many ethnic issues. Yet, limiting the focus only to migrants and immigrants, they are, on the whole, more liable to experience unemployment, and to encounter labour market difficulties. Though foreign workers have now penetrated many sectors of the economy to some degree, there is still a marked tendency to segmentation in labour market terms, with certain sectors and occupations having especially high concentrations. And despite the insecurity facing new arrivals, the 1992 SOPEMI report concludes:

> "Nonetheless, migrants who have long been settled in the host country make up by far the largest proportion of foreign jobless. This would suggest that one of the reasons for the extent of foreign unemployment is that the average time during which a foreigner remains out of work is lengthening because of the problems encountered in finding another job. Foreign women are a special case in that the rate of unemployment among them is rising fast, although at the same time foreign female employment is expanding in line with general employment trends for women nationals." (OECD, 1992*c*, pp. 28-29)

At various times and in various quarters, alarmist fears have been expressed that high fertility rates among new arrivals, combined with the general low birth and replacement levels in the established population, leads inexorably to a crisis of social stability and even national identity. There are serious grounds for such fears when some ethnic communities are concentrated spatially, leading to the "ghettoisation" of their problems. As to the demographic prognosis, however, the fears appear to be without foundation. It is true that many migrants do come from high fertility countries but once settled "indeed the fertility of the foreign population dropped under replacement levels in several countries (...). While migration added to the total populations of OECD Member countries, it remained too low to 'rejuvenate' them by lowering the average age especially given the tendency for migrants' fertility rates to approach the overall average" (OECD, 1991*b*, Chapter V). It is therefore highly unlikely that migration will prevent a long-term decline in population, or even its progressive ageing. Both would require the admission of new migrants at a significantly higher rate than that in recent decades (OECD, 1991*a*, p. 30, citing OECD, 1991*b*).

Complex educational implications arise from these developments, some of which relate primarily to socio-economic deprivation and its impact on educational opportunities and achievements, others which are cultural and linguistic or related to racism – a matter so sensitive that it can sometimes be sanitised from official reports and policies, hidden beneath cultural and linguistic explanations. Yet racism is a serious blight that has not been eradicated, but which rather has emerged in new forms in some countries, linked precisely to international movements.

The relationships between socio-economic conditions and patterns of educational experiences are examined throughout the remaining chapters of this report. A number of linguistic trends might be discerned. In some OECD countries, instruction for recent immigrants in the language of the country of arrival is less significant since flows, especially of young people, have diminished. This has not, however, eliminated the problems regarding "settled" minorities, or difficulties met by older adults. In other countries, immigration is far from receding and challenges remain. Another focus of language policies is more cultural and relates not to the language of the country of arrival but to the rights of instruction in the "mother tongue". This is frequently regarded as crucial to maintaining cultural identity, and it is increasingly accepted that children fluent in their mother-tongue adapt easier to a second language as well as other subjects. Another major problem is how to deal with a situation where many languages and cultures are represented in a single society, some of them large and well-established, but others relatively small in number. How is it possible to ensure adequate and continuous teaching in different languages, integrated as part of mainstream practice? And how is it possible to bridge the gap between official policy aims and full implementation in practice, especially in districts already having a variety of socio-economic and educational difficulties?

THE CONSEQUENCES OF EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION

THE EXPANSION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS

A consequence of the "quiet revolution" in educational participation is that the traditional majority of individuals who leave school after completing compulsory education is now in fact largely counted among the disadvantaged. The long-term trend of growth in educational participation is correspondingly reflected in expenditures.

The expansion of education and training systems has been so general and sustained over the post-war period in OECD countries that historians will undoubtedly chronicle and debate this trend in the future. While the 1990 Thailand World Conference on "Education for All" addressed the urgency to extend primary-level education to all in the developing countries by the year 2000, many developed countries struggled with the policy issues linked to universal post-compulsory education and training, mass higher provision, and the "cradle-to-grave" coverage of lifelong learning. Not only have OECD countries created massive and costly systems, but in making access and participation so extensively available, other specific problems have arisen for those who do not complete a long, relatively successful educational career and who leave school with little record.

The OECD report prepared for the 1990 meeting of the Ministers of Education spoke of a "quiet revolution":

> "While the 1960s remain embedded in the consciousness of many as the decade of educational expansion, the 1980s may come to be viewed in future years as an era of a 'quiet revolution' of expansion. Combining all pupils, students and trainees, teachers, support staff, and administrators is to arrive at very large numbers together engaged in the learning enterprise. Trends in the rates of participation in the programmes and settings that lie outside the period when school attendance is obligatory tell a story of the entrenchment of the common pattern being a prolonged educational career beginning in infancy and continuing up to the early twenties or even beyond. Participation in adult education and training grows apace." (OECD, 1992*b*, p. 101)

The normal duration of compulsory education is 10, 11, or even 12 years in many OECD countries. Whereas this period was once defined as the norm for the majority in any cohort, growth in participation in pre-primary, post-compulsory, higher education and adult learning has changed the situation of those who stay in school merely for the period they are obliged to by law and who are now clearly disadvantaged.

One indicator of the degree to which post-compulsory attendance has become the norm is to take the number of persons who have completed upper secondary education and in turn compare the most recent with the oldest cohorts (Table 1). The column which illustrates most graphically the change of educational attainment presents the ratio between the youngest (aged 25-30 years) and the oldest cohort (aged 55-64). It is positive in all countries, though in some the increase in the odds-ratio is relatively modest (for example the United States, Germany, Austria, Norway, and Switzerland, where even the older generations enjoyed relatively full access to upper secondary education). In many countries, this ratio has increased between 1.5 to 2.0 – meaning that the younger groups were up to twice as likely to have completed upper secondary education. In some countries, the chances are substantially greater: compared with the 55-64 year-old cohorts, the number of individuals aged 30-40 years old having completed upper secondary education is 3 times higher in Portugal, more than 3.5 higher in Italy, 4 times higher in Turkey and 5 times higher in Spain (available data at time of drafting).

When comparing cohorts of the same age, longer time frames help define the substantial change of norms in educational attainment and qualification. United States data, which compare adults aged 25 to 40 years old in 1950 with the same age group in 1985, vividly show how the unqualified have ceased to be the majority of the population and how they now constitute a much smaller, vulnerable minority: 48.4 per cent of women and 56.8 per cent of men were "unqualified" at the beginning of the 1950s. (These figures underline that female gains are not recent, and that if the focus is more on "avoiding the bottom" than "access to the top", men are as disadvantaged as women). By 1985, the percentages had shrunk dramatically to 12.5 and 9.2 per cent respectively. Even among semi and unskilled workers (men and women), the numbers of unqualified had dropped after the 35-year study from three-quarters to a mere quarter (Girod, 1990, Table 43, drawing on US Bureau of the Census data).

Data such as in Table 1 still understate the extent of change; the table aggregates the situation across 10-year intervals, so that some of the youngest cohorts (25-30 years) had already left education more than fifteen years ago. Other figures for 17-year-olds attending some form of secondary education, full or part-time, show how high this increase was already in 1992 (OECD, 1995*a*, Tables PO3(A1) and PO3(A2)). Among the 20 countries under review, 17-year-old retention rates were at least at 85 per cent in Belgium, Finland, France, Germany (FTFR), Japan, the

Table 1. **Percentage of each age group in the adult population having attained at least upper secondary education, 1991**

	Age groups				
	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	Ratio of youngest to oldest cohort
North America					
Canada	81	78	65	49	1.6
United States	86	88	83	73	1.2
Pacific area					
Australia[1]	57	56	51	42	1.4
New Zealand	60	58	55	49	1.2
European Community					
Belgium	60	51	38	24	2.5
Denmark[2]	67	61	58	44	1.5
France	67	57	47	29	2.3
Germany	89	87	81	69	1.3
Ireland	56	44	35	25	2.2
Italy	42	34	21	12	3.5
Netherlands	68	61	52	42	1.6
Portugal[3]	21	17	10	7	3.0
Spain	41	24	14	8	5.1
United Kingdom	81	71	62	51	1.6
Other Europe – OECD					
Austria	79	71	65	50	1.6
Finland	82	69	52	31	2.6
Norway	88	83	75	61	1.4
Sweden	85	78	63	46	1.8
Switzerland	87	84	77	70	1.2
Turkey	21	14	9	5	4.2
Mean OECD (weighted)	72	69	60	48	1.5
Central and Eastern Europe					
Czech and Slovak Federal Republic	87	79	68	51	1.7

[1] 1993.
[2] Of the 25-to-34 year olds, a relatively large number are still enrolled in education. Data may therefore understate the true values.
[3] 1991.

Source: OECD (1996), *Lifelong Learning for All*, Table A.12, Paris.

Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United States, and above 80 per cent in Denmark and Switzerland. The proportion of the age group entering "third-level" education gives another indicator of the progress towards the "quiet revolution". The same source shows that approximately a third of young people fall into this category in Austria, Greece, Ireland, Japan, Norway, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, and the United Kingdom, and nearly 50 per cent in Australia, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany and Sweden (*ibid.*, Table PO5). These raw figures tell nothing about the quality of provision and learning, nor about the important drop-out problem, and still less about the situation of those who do not enrol at all in further studies. But the caveats notwithstanding, these figures are impressive.

Examples taken from country studies allow other aspects of the expansion of participation to be charted more closely. The New Zealand statement, for instance, graphically describes the increase in pre-school attendance, even over as short a period as the 1980s, when the attendance rate for children under 4 years old grew from 40 to 70 per cent between 1982 and 1990, and from 70 to 96 per cent for children 4 years old in the same time period. In upper secondary education, despite a low retention rate compared to many other OECD countries, the increase for male students in grade 6 was between 44 and 69 per cent between the mid-1970s and 1990, and between 45 and 75 for female students. Over the same approximate fifteen-year span, retention rates in grade 7 show an upward trend of 15 to 30 per cent (males), and 10 to 37 (females) (OECD/EAP, New Zealand). German data show similar trends. Between 1970 and 1990, the attendance in the education system at ISCED levels 0, 1, or 2 fell from 75.9 to 63.2 per cent of the total pupil and student population, while the proportion of the total in higher education rose from 4.6 to 13.1 per cent in the same period. Compared with 1970, the 19-20 year-old group participation in Germany more than doubled, even in the dual system of vocational training which has become substantially more important (OECD/EAP, Germany).

Figures in Italy allow even longer time trends to be observed. The 1950/51 percentages of enrolment in "middle", "upper", and "university" education were 30.5, 10.3, and 5.5 respectively. Twenty years later, levels of 90.8, 44.5, and 18.9 were attained. By 1988/89, the increase was even more evident: 106.8 for the "middle" level, 62.5 for "upper", and 25.5 for "university" (OECD/EAP, Italy). Finnish figures confirm the picture but with a different emphasis. The proportion of those who participated in adult education in 1972 was approximately one-fifth, while the best estimate of Finnish adults who did so at some time in their lives stood at 56 per cent. By 1990, a dramatic increase in these estimates occurred. The annual figures have risen from 20 to 44 per cent, while the lifetime estimate stood at 85 per cent (OECD/EAP, Finland).

Even expenditure data do not contradict the overall picture of expansion (OECD, 1991*c*). If there has been evidence of a declining share of public spending devoted to education in the majority of OECD countries over the past two decades – and even as a share of GDP in some cases – this must be set against both the demographic trends, especially the very marked decline in school-age youngsters following the general drop in births (see Table 2), as well as new spending on other labour market programmes with a training component. Despite these falls, the general growth in national wealth, and hence the base for overall levels of real public outlays and in GDP over the period in question, means that education has

Table 2. **Evolution of births, 1960-1988 (thousands)**

	CAN	USA	JAP	AUS	NZL	OST	BEL	FIN	FRA	GER	GRE	IRE	ITA	NET	NOR	POR	SWE	SWI	UKM
1960	479	4 307	1 606	230	63	126	156	82	816	969	157	61	923	239	62	214	102	94	918
1961	476	4 317	1 589	240	65	132	158	82	835	1 013	150	60	924	247	63	218	105	99	944
1962	470	4 213	1 619	237	65	133	154	81	829	1 019	152	62	946	246	62	220	107	104	976
1963	466	4 142	1 676	236	65	135	158	82	865	1 054	148	63	978	250	63	212	113	110	990
1964	454	4 070	1 732	229	62	134	160	80	874	1 065	153	64	1 035	251	66	217	123	113	1 015
1965	419	3 801	1 839	223	60	130	155	78	862	1 044	151	63	1 018	245	66	210	123	112	998
1966	388	3 642	1 375	224	60	129	151	78	860	1 050	155	62	999	240	67	207	123	110	980
1967	371	3 555	1 955	229	61	127	146	77	837	1 019	163	61	962	239	67	202	122	107	962
1968	364	3 535	1 887	241	62	126	141	74	833	970	160	61	945	237	68	195	113	105	947
1969	370	3 630	1 907	250	63	121	141	67	842	903	154	63	949	248	68	190	108	103	921
1970	370	3 739	1 948	258	62	112	141	65	850	811	145	64	917	239	65	181	110	99	904
1971	362	3 556	2 037	276	64	109	139	61	881	779	141	68	911	227	66	181	115	96	902
1972	347	3 258	2 075	265	63	104	135	59	878	701	141	68	893	214	64	175	112	91	834
1973	343	3 137	2 109	248	61	98	129	57	857	636	138	68	888	195	61	172	11	88	730
1974	346	3 160	2 046	245	59	97	123	62	801	626	144	69	887	186	60	172	110	83	737
1975	358	3 144	1 897	233	57	94	119	66	745	601	142	68	842	178	56	180	104	79	698
1976	359	3 168	1 845	228	55	87	120	67	720	603	147	68	807	177	53	187	99	74	676
1977	362	3 327	1 767	226	54	86	122	66	745	582	143	68	758	173	51	181	96	73	657
1978	359	3 333	1 720	224	51	85	122	64	737	576	147	70	721	176	52	167	93	72	687
1979	366	3 494	1 654	223	52	86	124	63	757	582	148	72	683	175	52	160	96	72	735
1980	371	3 612	1 589	226	51	91	125	63	800	621	148	74	658	181	51	161	97	74	754
1981	370	3 629	1 541	236	51	94	125	63	805	625	141	72	628	179	51	154	94	74	731
1982	373	3 681	1 528	240	50	91	120	66	797	621	137	71	625	172	51	151	93	75	719
1983	374	3 639	1 521	243	50	93	117	67	749	594	132	67	613	170	50	144	92	74	722
1984	377	3 669	1 502	238	52	89	116	65	760	584	126	64	598	174	50	143	94	75	730
1985	379	3 761	1 439	243	52	90	114	63	768	586	117	62	589	178	51	130	98	75	751
1986	378	3 757	1 383	243	53	87	117	61	779	626	113	62	562	185	52	127	102	76	755
1987	370	3 809	1 347	244	55	85	117	60	768	642	106	59	560	187	54	123	105	77	776
1988	375	3 913	1 314	246	58	83	119	63	771	677	108	54	576	187	58	122	112	80	788

Source OECD Statistics

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enjoyed long-term growth in spending since 1970 at least to the end of the 1980s, after the period of the supposedly "growth-happy" sixties.

In fact, average *annual* growth rates in real public expenditure on education grew at 3.0 per cent or more in Australia, Greece, Ireland, Japan, and Portugal, and from 2 to 3.0 per cent in Austria, Finland, France, Italy, Norway, and Switzerland. In OECD countries, for which data are available, this statistic stood at below 1 per cent between 1970-88 in one country only: the United Kingdom (OECD, 1991*c*, Table 2.4). Focusing on the more recent 1980-88 time span, annual average figures were negative (*i.e.* declines in real terms) in Belgium (–0.1 per cent), Germany (–0.7), Sweden (–1.0), and Yugoslavia (–3.8); for the rest, growth is still the pattern. When these figures are adjusted for demographic and enrolment changes, by taking per student percentages instead, the magnitudes alter but the basic patterns remain very similar. Over the 1970-88 period, there was no average annual decline in real education spending per student in any of the 19 countries, and among which only the United Kingdom registered zero growth. For the more recent 1980-88 period, negative figures only appear for Sweden, the United Kingdom, and Yugoslavia among the same 19 countries (see Table 3).

These trends confirm, at least through illustrative data, that the expansion which is so often associated with the major changes of the 1960s has continued since then, whether enrolments or spending are in question. There are, of course, many variations and examples of cut-backs, and the figures describe only the most general trends. Apart from expansion, it is essential to consider the interpretation of that continuing growth, and in particular what it means for distributive aims.

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE LINK BETWEEN EXPANSION AND EQUALITY

Educational expansion is so familiar that little attention is given to the major trend it represents. If the vast educational investment and expansion of recent decades have not resulted in measurable progress, especially for disadvantaged groups, then serious questions arise as to whether large amounts of precious human and financial resources are not being expended in vain. Explanations reflect conflicting political stances and agendas. Challenges to the assumed link between growth and greater educational justice can be found in a number of analytical counter-arguments: "zero-sum" positional good; "changing goal posts"; "dumping ground"; "exclusion"; and "disadvantage-through-bureaucracy".

Greater access to and participation in education through expansion might be considered the major educational achievement of the era. Yet the trumpeting of success is not the dominant note of educational commentary.

In countries where retention rates lag behind those of their neighbours and competitors, for instance, critics are eager to stress lower levels of participation in post-compulsory education and training as the cause of economic difficulties.

Table 3 **Annual growth rate of real public educational expenditure per pupil/student**

	AUS	OST	BEL	CAN	FIN	FRA	GER	GRE	IRL	ITA	IPN	NET	NZL	NOR	POR	SWE	SWI	UKM	USA	YUG
1971		4.4		3.0			8.3	–4.4	3.0		5.9	3.1				1.4		1.1	2.6	
1972		6.2		–2.8			5.0	11.7	4.7	1.8	2.8	0.0				5.6		5.8	–1.0	1.3
1973	12.2	–1.5		4.3			0.7	3.9	4.0	4.4	2.7	0.2	6.7			–1.5		0.0	1.2	4.2
1974	19.3	3.2		1.0			1.5	12.8	15.4	–1.2	7.0	–0.4	6.8		11.6	–2.8		6.2	–0.3	8.3
1975	–9.2	4.4		3.8		0.6	3.2	3.6	–8.8	–4.5	–1.1	1.6	5.2	9.3	46.7	–0.8		–3.3	3.4	1.1
1976	–1.1	1.8		4.6		1.7	–1.8	3.7	1.8	7.6	3.1	1.3	–6.4	2.5	13.6	1.2		–3.0	1.9	6.7
1977	0.9	0.6		8.7		0.9	0.0	12.9	4.7	0.5	4.2	0.2	2.5	–0.8	12.4	1.2	7.1	–3.6	–0.4	10.4
1978	–0.4	2.6		–0.7		1.6	2.0	8.0	7.7	–4.4	8.7	4.0	–2.5	–0.1	–6.7	3.2	0.1	0.5	2.1	10.6
1979	1.0	3.8		2.7	–1.5	1.8	4.3	–4.2	3.1	10.9	2.6	2.0	–3.2	–0.9	–1.0	10.5	1.5	2.7	1.0	1.9
1980	–0.1	3.1		2.2	4.7	–0.1	2.3	–6.9	–1.7	1.5	7.5	2.6	11.6	–1.5	14.2	–0.4	3.2	0.6	1.2	–7.1
1981	1.1	9.8		3.4	3.8	9.5	1.4	3.5	4.5	5.0	–4.6	2.8	–4.0	0.7	5.0	–6.4	1.9	–1.5	0.0	–13.1
1982	–1.6	1.3		–0.9	2.2	4.7	–0.1	8.3	–6.6	2.8	–1.4	–0.3	–7.8	3.7	–2.0	–1.6	2.7	0.2	0.6	4.6
1983	–0.6	3.9		–1.0	2.7	1.2	0.0	–1.6	1.4	3.5	0.9	–0.1	–9.6	4.0	1.9	–3.6	5.1	1.5	2.5	21.5
1984	6.1	1.4	–0.2	1.8	0.0	0.5	–0.3	5.2	–1.4	10.8	0.6	–2.2	0.3	3.3	–4.1	1.5	2.7	–0.7	3.2	–3.6
1985	5.7	–1.3	3.4	1.0	4.9	2.4	3.9	7.8	1.2	2.2	0.9	3.7	11.5	2.8	1.8	1.1	3.5	–14.7	5.2	1.8
1986	0.5	5.7	1.5	4.4	3.0	1.7	2.8	–4.2	4.2	5.7	3.1	6.9	14.8	2.5	11.1	2.8	5.9	8.0	6.7	18.2
1987	–0.1	–1.2	–1.7	1.9	4.0	0.4	2.4	–0.2	3.5		1.4	5.8	3.0	4.3	3.2	1.7	2.6	3.0	3.1	
1988		–0.7		2.3	2.5	–0.5		–6.5			3.1			2.2		–3.7	–2.6			
1970-1975	2.7	3.3		1.8			3.7	5.3	3.4	0.1	3.4	0.9	6.2		23.0	0.3		1.9	1.2	1.5
1975-1980	0.1	2.4		3.5	1.5	1.2	1.3	2.4	3.1	3.1	5.2	2.0	0.2	–0.2	6.1	3.1	3.0	–0.6	1.2	4.3
1980-1988	1.5	2.3		1.6	2.9	2.4	1.4	1.4	0.9	5.0	0.5	2.3	0.8	2.9	2.3	–1.1	2.7	–0.8	3.0	–3.7
1970-1988	1.3	2.6		2.2	2.6	1.9	2.0	2.8	2.3	3.0	2.6	1.8	1.5	2.2	7.0	0.5	2.8	0.0	1.9	0.3

Source OECD (1991c), "Educational Expenditure, Costs and Financing: an Overview of Trends 1970-1988", Table 2.9

Perhaps the reason for lack of satisfaction is that the novelty attached to earlier periods of reform has gone, and ambitions statements on equity – such as President Lyndon B. Johnson's hope in the mid-1960s for America to learn its way out of poverty – belong to the past. To make matters worse, educational improvement is like a "black-hole" of unfulfilled promise; as one brow is crossed, the remaining hills stretch out into the seemingly endless horizon.

Certain political agendas limit frank debate. *Reformers* fear that acknowledging positive change will be interpreted as complacency in the face of outstanding challenges. The *egalitarian* may be more conscious of the reversal of the long-term trend towards greater income equality, noting that educational growth has made little difference. *Governments*, usually eager to draw attention to their achievements, nevertheless may wish to avoid pointing out the growing public funding of learning provision in fear of contradicting their vow to cut unnecessary funding and to target their spending more efficiently. Some governments may not even want to make political capital out of any success in targeting provision toward the least advantaged; there may well be official ambivalence between, on the one hand, pointing to the creation of mass learning societies as the hallmark of keeping up with the demands of the modern, technological world and, on the other hand, acknowledging the price in resources that this inevitably exacts. It is not just a matter of resources. The ambivalence also reflects uncertainty about the proper role of public policy after the Welfare State enthusiasm of the immediate post-war years. One observer commenting on Sweden, where such enthusiasm was so high, even noted that: "Instead of being seen as a solution, the public sector increasingly has come to be seen as the problem". (Rubenson, 1992)

All this suggests that scrutinising the facts of expansion alone does not suffice, since they are themselves subject to differing interpretations. There are also different strategies involved. Advocates of *higher retention levels in initial education and training systems* – through raising the age of compulsory attendance whether full or part-time; reducing drop-out rates in the different tracks; expanding the range and scale of provision in post-compulsory and higher education – argue that the knowledge and skills acquired through growth are thereby increased, to the general economic benefit of the country, and to the obvious benefit of the individuals concerned. They point to the large numbers of new, non-traditional students and trainees who now have access to opportunities denied to their parents, even more to their grandparents.

Lifelong learning advocates, on the other hand, may well agree that such expansion is a necessary feature of modern societies but query whether continually pushing back the frontier of age in initial education and training is either the most efficient or the most equitable path to follow. They would argue for expansion, but organised on radically different lines. In their view, the usual international percentage comparisons of cohorts in their late teens and early twenties are very partial if not misleading; a country whose percentage is modest but which offers ample opportunities to return to learning on a recurrent basis may well be closer to the ideal than its opposite.

Conservative sceptics to pursuing the route of expansion might put forth their traditional worry that "more means worse". They might also question whether the active pursuit of greater equality of opportunity is preferable to tolerance of inequality while aiming at growth that is ultimately better for all. They might assert in response to the recurrent education advocates that theirs is not a more equitable arrangement; learning opportunities for adults are subject to precisely the same, if not worse, inequalities as those observed in initial systems. There is no *prime facie* case for greater social equality. In defence, the lifelong advocate may well point out that greater equity may derive from reducing the determinism of "front-loaded" systems through which the social and economic dye is cast early. They might add that there is nothing surprising about the perpetuation of established participation patterns in adult learning experiences – it would be extraordinary if it were the reverse – but this stubborn fact suggests that promoting equity and access must be as active in policies and programmes for adults as it has been for youngsters.

There are, in addition, a number of serious analytical counter-arguments to those which assume a simple link between growth and greater educational justice. These concerns are forwarded not from those sceptical of the value of pursuing more equal opportunities, but from those seeking to avoid the counterproductive, unintended consequences of expansion.

First is the *zero-sum "positional good"* counter-argument. This is that education and training function exclusively as allocative mechanisms to subsequent labour market and life-chances. Expansion and contraction of learning opportunities make no difference to the sum total of these chances, though at the margin they may be able to alter the possibilities for certain individuals to advance (if at the expense of others who might otherwise have done so). In short, the game is zero-sum. The most promising achievement would be that, in taking the aggregates of individuals in different population groups such as SES or racial/ethnic categories, the proportions of each class gaining each level of educational qualification/experience would become more equal.

A less extreme version of the previous counter-argument, which does not deny so categorically the benefits of educational growth, emphasizes the change that accompanies growth. It maintains that expansion also means *changing* goal posts, or hurdles, of advance. As more students participate in a particular level of education, the meaning and currency (more conservative sceptics might also add: "(...) and the quality!") of that experience correspondingly alter. New and finer distinctions come into play, and higher levels of achievement are required in order to assure certain educational and socio-economic benefits (which particular subject studied, for example, or which institutions attended), when previously participation alone would have sufficed.

The *dumping-ground* counter-argument questions the value and benefit of some new provision. Much of the expansion of education and training, especially in the initial front-end systems and for non-traditional students and trainees, has not been inspired by any expected benefit of enhanced knowledge, skills, or attitudes. Instead, it has acted purely as a holding mechanism in times of high youth unemployment and the delayed transition to working life. To make matters worse, there is actually a stigma, a negative benefit, attached to such participation (a fact recognised by the participants, teachers/trainers, employers, and society at large).

In the *exclusion* counter-argument viewpoint, the expansion of education and training, and with it the general attainment level of the population, leaves the disadvantaged in an even worse position than when they had no qualifications beyond minimum school attendance. As qualifications become a necessary, while far from sufficient, ticket of entry to economic and social life, the unqualified – among whom the most disadvantaged are concentrated – are increasingly marginalised and excluded. Far from benefiting the disadvantaged, therefore, the educational expansion which is intended to draw them into the "learning society" is actually constructing ever-higher walls to keep them out. Whether the rising thresholds in question are of knowledge and skills demanded in the labour market, or simply the diplomas bestowed by educational courses irrespective of the actual knowledge and skills they represent, the impact of expansion on the most disadvantaged is undeniably negative.

The disadvantage through bureaucracy counter-argument is a variant of the previous argument and focuses less on individual chances and more on the institutional webs and networks that expansion creates. As the range and scale of education and training provision expand, educational bureaucracy becomes ever more entrenched. Not only does economic and social life become increasingly complex, placing a premium on the ability to engage in educational strategy-playing to the still greater disadvantage of the already-disadvantaged. But the learning provision which imparts knowledge, skills, and culture comes under increasing pressure from a growing set of latent functions to do with maintaining the bureaucracy itself. These include, for instance, channelling substantial efforts into assessments that meet system maintenance needs rather than those of pupils and students; or giving a greater share of resources to administration and non-teaching functions in order to control the growing institutional web of provision. Some might add that educational expansion, especially if rapid, is bound to have a mixed impact on the *quality* of the opportunities established. And because of the sheer size of the systems created, quantitative criteria, such as educational participation or survival, eventually dominate the crucial but more complex qualitative criteria of what is being learned and taught. In systems that reward survival, the already-advantaged have a head start in maintaining their existing advantage.

SELECTED COUNTRY EVIDENCE: MORE OR LESS EQUALITY?

Since this report is based on various sources and the conventional forms of country contribution to OECD activities, it is unable to muster the kinds of comparative data that permit *rigorous* answers to queries such as "more or less equality in education over time?". International research projects help fill the gap of this selected country evidence to illustrate various points. Apart from differences in patterns from one country to another, the indicators show varying trends. Continued progress towards greater equality usually goes hand-in-hand with other signs that differentials have not closed, or with countervailing tendencies, such as those outlined in the previous section, that significantly blunt apparent gains. Adopting different optics serves the additional purpose of emphasising that there is not a single dimension along which greater equality is to be assessed; improved access to privileged educational programmes may, for instance, coincide with an exacerbated situation for the most disadvantaged groups who gain least from their educational experiences. Or, if achievements are greater at higher levels while relative chances alter little, some might still judge this as progress – albeit circumscribed progress.

Achievement and attainment across the distribution

Has the balance tilted from "ascription" to "achievement"? In only two countries allowing long-term comparisons has the unequivocal trend emerged towards lessening ties between social background and educational attainment. In all countries that possessed the requisite data, there were significant reductions in gender differences. Thus, a rising requirements threshold in education and the labour market may lead to a stalemate with no one better off, despite the expanded provision, while the lowest achievers – left ever further behind – will be even worse off. Two important questions are: To what degree? What have been the absolute gains and losses of target groups of students?

An impressive body of international evidence has been gathered and analysed to provide substance to the enquiry about whether societies have become more open and meritocratic through the loosening over time of the powerful mechanisms linking social position and the individual's success in an educational career. In the language of the sociologist, the question is whether the balance between "ascription" and "achievement" has been tilted over the long term towards "achievement". Few of the countries under review revealed a clear-cut trend.

This body of evidence (Blossfeld and Shavit, 1991) comes from a cross-national study of educational attainment processes allowing through-time comparisons in thirteen countries: the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Great

Britain, Italy, Switzerland, Taiwan, Japan, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Israel (the studies predating the most recent changes to national boundaries and constitutions). The conclusions address inequalities of attainment relating to both socio-economic strata and gender, taking expansion as the point of departure. The results can be at best described as "mixed", if one expects a direct path from expansion to greater equality:

> "In all thirteen countries, there was a marked educational expansion during the periods examined. This is equally true for industrialising and for advanced industrialised societies, for capitalist and for socialist states, and for Western and non-western countries. Furthermore, in most cases, expansion was not uniform across all educational levels. Instead, educational systems expanded much more rapidly at the primary and secondary levels than at the post-secondary level. Consequently, as larger proportions of successive cohorts enter and complete secondary education, they encounter severe bottlenecks in the transitions to tertiary education. In some cases, access to tertiary education actually declined across cohorts, as the pool of candidates increased dramatically.
>
> The analyses of linear regressions of educational attainment reveal a mixed pattern. In two countries (Sweden and the Netherlands) there is a clear overall decline in the effect of social background for the two transitions across cohort, whereas in six countries the effects of socio-economic origin on education attainment have remained virtually stable. In the remaining five countries there have both a decline and stability or even increases in the effects. Thus expansion of education does not consistently reduce the association between social origins of students and their educational attainment.
>
> (...) The effect of social origin on grade progression is strong at the beginning of the career and declines for later educational transitions (except for Switzerland). This is partly due to the fact that school systems select students on the basis of characteristics which are correlated with their socio-economic origins (Mare, 1980, 1981). However, there is also some indication that the effects of socio-economic origins decline across educational transitions because older students are less dependent on the family of origin in making (and financing) educational decisions.
>
> (...) While the effects of students' origins decline across transitions, there is little change in these effects across cohorts. There are only two exceptions to this pattern: Sweden and the Netherlands in which the effects of father's occupation and education on the low and intermediate transitions declined. Both the Dutch (De Graaf and Ganzeboom) and Swedish (Jonsson) authors attribute the declining effects to a general policy of equalisation of living conditions for the different social strata, and in the Netherlands there has been a long-term opening up in many aspects of the stratification system.

> (...) For ten of the thirteen societies, data were available on both men and women. In all ten cases, the data reveal a marked reduction in gender differences in means of educational attainment. In some cases, most notably in Poland, the United States, and Germany, the gender gap has actually been reversed. Thus, girls were more likely to benefit from the expansion of educational systems than lower class boys. In addition, the association between gender and educational transitions has declined in each of the studies in which it was estimated. Two important causes for this decline are suggested: girls are less often tracked into dead-end vocational tracks (Heyns and Bialecki) and families' discrimination against girls has declined, especially in the middle class (Jonsson)." (see Blossfeld and Shavit, 1991, pp. 24-25).

A couple of caveats need to be noted. First, however broad the range of countries is by the standards of other international comparisons, it is still far from the full OECD membership; the applicability of the findings is consequently limited. Second, while the national studies compared are recent by the accepted criteria of academic research, the comparisons they permit of change or its lack over the 20th century do not necessarily reflect events of the most recent years. Nevertheless, it provides a useful point of departure.

The mechanism limiting the benefits of expansion has already been identified: when the thresholds of skills and qualifications have been rising in the face of both educational expansion and the reduction of labour market opportunities – especially in jobs demanding relatively low skills – the disadvantaged become even more "at risk". Some country evidence spells this out in concrete terms. The German "at-risk" report describes this mechanism (OECD/AR, Germany):

> "Secondary general school-leavers have to compete for the more attractive apprenticeships, especially in commercial vocations with intermediate school and even grammar school leavers. Thus the intermediate school certificate today tends to become the standard entry certificate for the dual system. The chances of secondary general school leavers have been reduced to a small spectrum of less attractive vocations, *e.g.* in the construction and car repair business and as bakers for the boys, and hairdressers, house-keeping, and sales jobs for the girls (...). For the more attractive vocations, especially those of commercial clerks in industry and banking, often the grammar school leaver is preferred, but also for the attractive craftsmen 's and industrial workers" jobs, the intermediate schools' exam has become widely necessary." (p. 24)

De Vijlder cites Dutch evidence to ask a similar question:

> "De Jong *et al.* found that among HBO-freshmen, children from high SES groups are less represented and those from low SES groups more represented. However, although MBO graduates have a lower average SES level within the 'receiving' HBO, the SES level of the same group within the MBO from which

> they depart is higher than the average MBO population. This is eliciting the question 'who will be better off in the end?'. Suppose 90 per cent of the MBO graduates should leave full-time education and opt for work, should they be worse off? If a much larger proportion enrol in HBO, those who do not will eventually be in a disadvantaged position in the labour market, as they will be in a lower position in the labour queue. To prevent such a disadvantaged position, they are also forced to enrol in HBO, taking at least the relative advantage of not being worse off. To put it another way: a rat-race will appear for the highest qualifications without a better position for anybody and without any advantage for low SES groups." (De Vijlder, 1993, p. 12)

Indeed, while no one will *in aggregate be better off, the disadvantaged and low achiever will be worse off* due simply to a quickening rat-race. Against such a backdrop of higher requirements and a more inhospitable labour market, the traditional features of educational failure become more problematic and hard to overcome.

Such mechanisms can appear throughout the spectrum of educational provision, including in higher technical and vocational educational developments. The Finnish statement notes the long-term trend to greater social equality in higher education, though its illustrates the 1950-70 trend rather than the more recent period (OECD/EAP, Finland, pp. 20-23). Even over the 1980s there was a growth in opportunities at this level, since recruitment rose (from 12 000 to 16 000/17 000) at the same time as the relevant age group decreased. As a result:

> "As the relevant age group has been decreased, the proportion of higher education opportunities of the age group has grown from 12-10 per cent to 20-20 per cent. Despite the increases, competition for study places has become stiffer. The main reason for this is that applicants' educational objectives and the distribution of intakes do not match in the structure of the Finnish education system (...). The stiff competition has given rise to a practice conducive to inequality: cram courses". (pp. 20-21)

The statement also reports that the position of the unqualified is safeguarded at least in part through the existence of quotas; this is set at 5-15 per cent for the non-matriculated students.

A set of questions naturally arises about the relationships between competition and equality. How is it possible to assess such a system in Japan, which combines intense competition – marked differentiation in the standing of different secondary and higher education institutions – with a general egalitarian belief in individual potential? To what degree should the cultural differences between the Japanese system and those in Europe be taken to invalidate comparisons in terms of equity? For instance, the very evidence gathered in this chapter might seem inappropriate in Japan, as Okamoto suggests:

> "In some other developed countries, there have been a number of research efforts on the correlation between the academic achievements of children and their backgrounds, *e.g.* educational backgrounds of the parents, income of the family, residential areas, social status of the parents, race, etc. However, this kind of research virtually does not exist in Japan and is almost impossible. People think that such research is both unnecessary and inappropriate, and could lead to certain forms of discrimination." (Okamoto, 1992, p. 44)

Whatever the answers to these questions, the formulations in the preceding paragraphs tend to assume that "better off" is to be understood primarily in relative terms. In other words, the fact of continuing to a higher level in education or training confers no benefit in terms of knowledge or skills beyond the relative *position* enjoyed. In sociological terms, it assumes that education operates exclusively as a "positional good" (Hirsch, 1977). Useful though the concept may be, it is nevertheless a blunt instrument for the understanding of educational developments (see the Technical Annex at the end of the report; "education as a good in itself" and "education as a means to other ends"). The important question is less whether education operates as a positional good or not, as everybody agrees that it does, but instead the degree to which it operates as such, and precisely *which* courses and qualifications lie above or below in the hierarchies that define "position". The relativism implied by an exclusive attention to position can also lead to neglecting the real absolute gains on which further progress can be built. US trends illustrate this point, but they also show how vulnerable the gains may be in the face of worsening socio-economic conditions (see below).

Much of the available evidence draws on the chances of retention in the higher levels of education and training systems, and is based primarily on participation – attainment – rather than on the more qualitative indicators of achievement. Smith and O'Day (1991) review the trends in the academic achievement levels of different groups of US students and give grounds for a more positive interpretation of the policies enacted with a view to equalising chances than received in the pessimistic 1970s, and indeed paint a more positive picture of progress than some of the other findings in this chapter. The authors nevertheless add a note of concern to their positive message: the worsening poverty levels compromise progress without significant action to meet the situation.

Reporting on the US situation to the end of the 1980s, Smith and O'Day provide positive messages about the achievement gains of the traditionally disadvantaged:

> "The highly focused efforts in the schools of the needy to improve the basics of reading and arithmetic stemmed from a variety of sources, from the compensatory education programs of the federal government, from state requirements on students to pass competency tests for graduation, and from local district 'effective schools' and school improvement programs. These efforts dominated

> schooling policies in the late 60s through the early 1980s and they seem to have worked. The scores of African American children and children from 'educationally disadvantaged' families improved over the time period. The NAEP reading scores of African American students show a particularly dramatic improvement – this might be expected since reading has been the most emphasised of the basic skills. Moreover, the gains appear to have been influenced by circumstances happening to students both in their early years (0-9 years) and during their later school years (9-17 years). This suggests to us that the effects are due to changes in schooling as well as to changes in early childhood and home experiences.
>
> While the scores for African American students and, to a lesser extent, students from 'educationally disadvantaged' families have increased from 1971 to 1988, the scores of White and 'educationally advantaged' students have remained practically constant. In fact, there is evidence that the scores at the top of the White distribution have actually declined (Mullis and Jenkins, 1990). Thus, the reductions in the achievement gap between African American and White students have resulted almost entirely from gains in the achievement test score of African Americans."

Unfortunately, the pessimistic predictions contained in the passage have proved all too prescient. A subsequent review reporting more recent data clearly showed that the late 1980s represent a high point (O'Day and Smith, 1992). Since then, gaps between white and African-American students and between urban advantaged and disadvantaged students no longer narrowed, but indeed increased on a number of achievement measures. It provides a necessary reminder that no trend in education is immutable, and that gains in one period might well be undone in another. But these US trends notwithstanding, these findings also help to underscore that the "relative chances" perspectives might neglect the absolute gains that positive educational investment can bring. Such perspectives risk, as did earlier studies on the limits of educational reform (most notably Jencks *et al.*, 1972), providing ammunition to those who would dispute that there is any benefit in continuing the endeavour of equity, access, and participation through education, either for those directly concerned or for society at large.

"Access to advantage"

Some countries show no improvement in relative chances of access to higher education, while in others, only modest signs of widened opportunities. The chances of non-completion for some classes – the drop-out problem – are equally skewed. Among target groups, women show more progress regarding access to prestige programmes than do lower socio-economic status groups. It is important to clarify what constitutes "desirability" and advantage in education in order to avoid merely reinforcing "most respectable prejudices".

Some basic questions have thus been raised in this chapter: Has the general expansion of access to higher levels of education resulted in an equalisation of chances? Or has access for all increased without any levelling of chances? In all countries, the traditional socio-economic patterns of participation remain, but in some countries expansion has dented them more than in others. In line with the general conclusions of Blossfeld and Shavit (1991), women have made clearer strides forward. The trends underlie, in fact, the value of giving attention to the *interaction of SES and gender*; middle-class female students have made the greatest inroads into established inequalities, and in ways shared by neither the less privileged among males or females.

For some, there is little cause for celebration about enrolment trends to date. In Halsey (1992), UK figures for higher education show that the portion of the working-class entering higher education has hardly changed between 1980-85 compared with those from managerial and professional backgrounds, though the figures reveal that modest change in patterns of access did occur between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s. This was revealed less by any significant improvement in socio-economic status advances and more by the weakening dominance of those from managerial and professional families compared with those from other non-manual origins.

> "For degree holders in 1974 whose fathers were professionals or managers, the ratio was 2.75, *i.e.* they were nearly three times the rate that would have been obtained if degree-holding were randomly distributed. At the other extreme the children of semi-skilled and unskilled workers had a ratio of 0.28 and the children of skilled manual workers 0.52. By 1985, these ratios had moved to 2.05, 0.36 and 0.50 respectively." (Halsey, 1992, p. 24)

The Italian statement describes a similar mix of trends (OECD/EAP, Italy). Despite the general expansion of higher education together with the broader access of students from *all* backgrounds in higher reaches of education systems, the influence of social origins to improve one's chances of reaching the different levels has not changed over time, the sole exception being the completion of basic education for children from agricultural backgrounds.

Yet not all statements are this gloomy. The German statement shows recent signs of equalisation (OECD/EAP, Germany). Data on first year students in 1982 and 1990 make it possible to compare the chances of students from different social backgrounds – children of civil servants, of employees, of the self-employed, and the offspring of workers – to enter higher education, distinguishing between universities and the *Fachhochschule*. The period covers the curtailment in higher education places in the mid-1980s, when children of all backgrounds had lower levels of participation in higher education, to the marked growth at the end of the decade. First, comparing the ratios of the chances of those from the different social backgrounds to gain access to university study (the ratios are expressed with workers' chances as unity), the relevant figures in 1982 were 2.8, 2.4 and 2,1 in the order of the social categories mentioned above. By 1985, the chances of working class children had slipped further behind in relation to the other three social categories – 3.3, 2.6, and 2.3 respectively. However, with the expansion of education not only has the earlier position been recovered but there are also signs of improvement, albeit modest. In 1990, the ratios were 2.5, 2.3, and 2.2 respectively.

Fachhochschule statistics tell a similar story on trends, though the ratios are significantly larger, *i.e.* the relative chances of a worker's son or daughter reaching this level and type of institution are even more remote than for university entrance. Such difference is based on the fact that those from more privileged homes are more likely to seek and obtain a *Fachhochschule* education. In this case, the ratios are: 1982, 7.5, 4.8, and 4.3; 1985, 8.5, 5.2, and 4.8; 1990, and 7.0, 4.1, and 3.9. A certain levelling of chances did occur, however, between 1985 and 1990.

Even with the evidence of a correlation between expanded opportunities in higher education and greater equalisation of class chances, the indicator used is crucial in certain cases. During times of expansion, more students are retained in the education system; however, this is not necessarily an accurate forecast of those who will successfully complete course work, or a socially neutral variable, since the most likely drop-outs will be among those from non-traditional backgrounds. The Danish statement referred to below shows that the drop-out issue receives particular attention in some countries. Halsey (*op. cit.*, p. 31) refers to it as a particular problem in France, where the relative educational success enjoyed by women in recent years has not been matched by comparable advances of students from humble origins, especially in their ability to "stay the course".

Danish figures give a specific meaning to the term "progress" as "greater access of students from less privileged backgrounds", albeit in unspectacular fashion. In the last decade or more, the proportion of young Danes from working class backgrounds entering higher education after compulsory schooling has increased considerably. But, the number who actually finish with a *completed* vocational or higher education diploma has not increased to the same degree (OECD/EAP, Denmark). The vital issue of completion (and hence of its obverse "drop-out") has to be taken into account, for it holds both policy and methodological implications. "Drop-out" is a worrying and neglected side of the expansion of access to higher education in which participation is not completed to a meaningful conclusion. It is yet a further reminder to pay close attention to the precise indicators from which to draw policy implications.

Other studies also confirm that international progress towards equality as an overall trend remains unclear. The same was also expressed in the major research synthesis by Blossfeld and Shavit quoted at the beginning of this section. Nevertheless, there are some grounds for identifying positive developments. One of the contributing authors to the Blossfeld and Shavit research for one of the two countries where equalisation trends were discernible – Sweden – confirms that the evidence in fact shows that the impact of social origin on education attainment has weakened over the century (Jonsson, 1990). But he also stresses that equalisation is a rather weak trend compared with expansion:

> "However, it should be underlined that the major change in attendance at higher levels of education during this century is not towards equalisation, but towards increased overall participation. In fact, when this is taken into consideration, the relative equalisation appears to be almost irrelevant." (Jonsson, 1990, p. 147)

Equalisation is more prominent and unambiguous for differing regional backgrounds than for differing social origins. For gender, the trends accord with those reported above: there is definitely greater equality, though it has not come in linear fashion. It introduces the additional concept of the *"prestige programme"* as essential to judging progress towards equalisation. Given the expansion of higher education in general, focusing on "prestige programmes" may provide a truer reflection of the degree to which access to advantage has been genuinely widened. There are however mixed results – women in general have gained more than the socially under-privileged, though the gains are concentrated among privileged women. Jonsson summarises the situation in Sweden as follows:

> "The conclusion about an equalisation is supported by the increased participation by women in the 'prestige programs' at the university (SCB, 1985). Furthermore, by now women constitute a majority of those who attend tertiary education (60 per cent in 1986, according to figures presented in SCB, 1986). However, it is actually very difficult to make a judgement of educational inequalities between men and women, since both the school and labour market in Sweden are highly segregated, even in an international perspective." (Jonsson, 1990, pp. 149-152)

Another country sharing this trend is New Zealand, whose country statement clearly affirms that:

> "In the past twenty years the tremendous growth in female participation in university education has resulted in considerable improvements in many fields. In fields such as law, medicine, and veterinary science, women are now equally represented in undergraduate programmes. Commerce has been the fastest growing area of female enrolment, although women are not equally represented. During the 1980s there was further considerable growth in the rate of female participation at university: in total enrolments women now outnumber men." (OECD/EAP, New Zealand)

Danish trends also confirm the fears embodied in the "counter-arguments" concerning countervailing tendencies that weaken the link between expansion and greater equality. The country statement notes:

> "Especially concerning the social patterns in access to the most prestigious higher education faculties (*e.g.* law, medicine) there have not been great changes. It is still young people with high socio-economic background who enter and graduate from these educations. On the other side, the group with very poor educational qualifications is diminishing, but problems on the labour market for this group are increasing." (OECD/EAP, Denmark)

It refers more specifically to the access of those from less privileged social backgrounds to prestige programmes, rather than to the differential gender chances of the Swedish and New Zealand cases. In spite of these differences, evidence points to mixed conclusions, though nevertheless confirming the general picture that progress is much more apparent for gender equality in overall participation, despite the caveats, than for social background.

In many OECD countries, women have made inroads into the prestige programmes, but in Italy the same progress is not so clear. No matter what the social class in question, women are under-represented in the most desired and prestigious programmes (OECD/EAP, Italy). Similarly, for the United Kingdom, not only in class but in gender terms, the scale of change has not been as clear as in some other cases. Women, Halsey reports, have gained on men but their advance has been disproportionate for higher education institutions of lower prestige. He states that this tendency is not universal: it is not confirmed in the United States (Halsey, 1992).

The concept "prestige programme" needs precision, particularly concerning its varying interpretations, which make significant differences to the conclusions they suggest. More generally, it is necessary to clarify the definitions and constituents of educational advantage. It is revealing that when the extent of progress towards *gender* equality is challenged, the still-low female participation in technological programmes is stressed as evidence of exclusion from the most desirable educational routes. When the *social composition* of access and participation instead becomes the focus, comparisons tend to shift to the "high prestige" programmes as constituting the most desirable. There should thus be clarity and consistency regarding "desirability", in order to avoid the accusation of merely reinforcing "most respectable prejudices" (Murphy, 1992).

Depending on the criteria of advantage adopted, the conclusions of the analysis may alter. One might expect to find, for instance, that technological programmes have served as an important channel of access to further studies for working-class males, while the high status programmes have become increasingly significant ports of entry for middle-class females. Some country evidence suggests not only that such differences do indeed exist, but also that countries may not share identical experiences.

Spain is not atypical, for instance, in observing:

> "Where choice of university studies is concerned, the profile of the proprietary middle classes and the working class diverge a little more from the average than that of the rest of the social classes. The proportion of students from these two social sources that choose to study short courses is much higher than that of the rest."

What is most interesting in this context, however, is the next sentence:

> "In general, the most privileged social groups choose higher studies and the greatest 'vocation' of the upper functional middle classes is clearly for *engineering courses*" (OECD/EAP, Spain, p. 59, emphasis added).

This stands in contrast with findings for Germany, which may also be typical of certain other OECD countries (Huber, 1990). Comparing the social background of university students in Germany in the mid-1980s, he found that those from "low" social origins were more represented in engineering courses (12 per cent of all "low" social origin university students as opposed to 10 per cent of all "high" social origin students) as well as in mathematics and natural sciences (20 per cent as against 19 per cent) and, more to be expected, in the social sciences, education and psychology (17 per cent over 8 per cent). The major disciplinary area in which the "high" social background students are concentrated is medicine (17 per cent against 7 per cent), with a greater tendency as well to study law and economics (21 over 17 per cent). This demonstrates that what constitutes "prestige" or "advantage" in different higher education systems is not obvious. It is an interesting comparative field of study in its own right.

One country that clearly shows how women have made inroads in the university sector (across all types of institutions), and how the overall statistic of equal enrolments masks very wide disparities between technical and non-technical faculties is Spain, a country whose technical programmes enjoy particular social standing. From the end of the 1970s to about the end of the 1980s, the overall gender balance of Spanish university students finally equalised after a 60-40 male advantage in 1978-79. Women now outnumber men in the faculties and university colleges (just under 50 per cent), and especially in the non-technical university schools (64 per cent female in 1987-88). In contrast, women comprise only 16 per cent of students in the higher technical schools, and a mere 10 per cent of those in the technological university schools, albeit from levels of less than 8 per cent ten years earlier (OECD/EAP, Spain).

A pattern that has not changed despite the overall equalisation of gender access (though not faculty enrolment) to higher education is the gender distribution in post-graduate programmes. "Although the majority of university graduates have been women in recent years" reports the Finnish submission, "their proportion of postgraduate degree holders has been much smaller". Data on New Zealand, a country which enjoyed a period of opening access in the 1980s, confirm that participation in post-graduate studies still lags behind, and especially in the sciences, technology and engineering. In fact, at least up to the mid-1980s, there were no countries where the gender balance was level in the higher academic reaches of post-graduate study (OECD, 1986, Chapter 1). Post-graduate level study gives another interpretation of educational "desirability", in addition to the "prestige programmes". Some caution is nevertheless required when interpreting higher enrolments in post-graduate programmes as necessarily indicative of educational advantage. While in some professional fields it undoubtedly is, in others advanced technical qualifications followed by on-the-job training is now preferred to extended university education.

Expenditures

Focusing on equality of outcomes should not neglect inputs, including expenditures, for such a focus can divert attention from outstanding inequalities and from the resource implications of equalising opportunities and inputs. In this regard, spending inequalities on different groups of pupils and students caused by the differing distributions of participation and expenditure in different sectors of education and training suggest modifications to well-established patterns but no fundamental revisions.

A final area for consideration in this chapter is the distribution of expenditures. There has recently been a tendency to neglect the importance of equalising "inputs", including spending, by concentrating on "outcomes". This is considered a radical stance, since it moves beyond addressing the traditional variables of educational policy-making to home in on the extent to which outcomes themselves have become more equitably distributed. To the extent that this implies change in teaching and learning practices and in calling for tangible evidence of progress, this claim to radicalism certainly has some justification. A similar radicalism may be behind the call for higher *quality* in education and training, despite the common association of the aim to improve quality and traditionalism; again if the improvement criteria are demanding – requiring the altering of teaching and learning in schools, colleges, and training centres.

However, to shift from inputs to outcomes, as the main criteria by which to assess equity, may be taken hastily, neglecting spending and other vital resources which remain woefully unequal and inequitable in distribution, and overlooking the far-reaching implications for inputs if outcomes are to be significantly changed. Any neglect of inputs will also avert attention from the major inequalities that persist, and may lead to a serious under-estimation of the cost that must be borne if social justice is to be realised. A report published in the United States put it this way:

> "(...) the overall resource picture can mask serious inequities facing certain high-poverty schools. Schools in high-poverty communities clearly confront

special problems that warrant extra resources if they are to meet the extra needs of their students. Furthermore, when high-poverty schools are located in low-revenue districts, resource limitations may seriously hamper efforts to close the achievement gap between high- and low-poverty schools." (National Assessment of Chapter 1 Independent Review Panel, 1993, p. 26)

Even the notion "high and low poverty schools" represents a new departure in official recognition of the serious differences in opportunities that persist between schools or districts. Furthermore, resource issues are not uniquely specific to schools but apply to the entire spectrum of education and training provision.

In fact, there is an in-built resource inequity that derives from the very patterns of educational participation. It can best be demonstrated by referring to the era when continuing education was restricted to a small educated elite. The bulk of the pupil population, including the large majority of the less advantaged, remained only for the compulsory years. The much smaller "tails" of the distributions at either end of these years included those privileged few in nursery and higher education, so that the spending distribution on different groups of pupils and students was extremely skewed. In many countries, the costly "tails" were publicly financed by the bulk of taxpayers who saw none of the benefits in the form of continuing education, either for themselves or for their children. The higher education "tail" of the distribution was much more expensive than the provision of ordinary schooling. How, then, has the distribution of per pupil/student expenditure altered with the expansion of education and is it now at odds with the characterisation of the earlier, elite model of educational organisation?

The Netherlands supplied data showing patterns and recent modifications (OECD/EAP, Netherlands). Taking the distribution of spending per pupil/student in 1987 and the 8 year primary cycle as the base index of 1.0, the other cycles all spend more per head, especially the expensive university sector. The ratios to primary spending are 1.5 for general secondary (AVO); 1.7 for vocational secondary (LBO and MBO); 2.7 for higher vocational education (HBO); attaining as much as 6.3 for the university sector as a ratio to per capita primary spending, and 3.4 for special education. The familiar pattern is still evident, with lowest relative outlays for the primary cycle which all pupils attend and the highest for the universities which remain the domain of the privileged. But when a different set of ratios is calculated – that comparing 1975 with the 1987 levels – a revised picture emerges. Now the primary level is one of the highest with 1.9 – 1987 spending levels were almost double those of the mid-1970s, and topped only by the increase in special education (see below) which is slightly higher at 2.0. It is instead the university level that shows the lowest growth at 1.1 (indicating just how high its earlier comparative advantage was – 10.6 per capita over the primary level as opposed to the later 6.0 figure), with between 1.3 and 1.4 for the other general and vocational sectors. Though the change can be described as little more than modest, it can definitely be seen as a trend towards equity insofar as the greatest growth has taken place in the sectors in which all participate, and least in the more privileged settings. Though the old pattern remains, it is somewhat modified.

Although the country submissions for this report do not allow model calculations of the changing distribution of educational expenditures, the above example is suggestive of the ingredients of such international through-time comparisons. The calculations would be based on the revision of per capita spending in each of the main branches of education according to the participation rates of the different population groups of interest, prior to a final aggregation of what a "typical" pupil/student receives in the course of her/his educational career. These estimates might be extended to include spending on special targeted programmes, averaged out nationally, and labour market training, including training for the disadvantaged. They would almost certainly need to take account of adult education and training outlays.

Such calculations would probably put a more positive stamp on the equity effects of expansion than the other changes reported in this chapter, though inequalities would still remain, especially with regard to different forms of adult education and training. Not only would the aggregated per capita expenditure figures reflect the major changes in participation and composition in the non-compulsory forms of pre-primary, post-compulsory, higher and, to a lesser extent perhaps, adult education and training. But it would reflect also the varying fortunes of these different sectors themselves, and their equity implications, especially the general squeezing of higher education. The relative buoyancy of school level spending, combined with new labour market outlays, compared with the paring of per-student expenditures in higher education might thus be taken as evidence of positive links between expansion and equity, even if the redistribution in question is relatively modest.

General OECD expenditure data confirm these patterns, even though they do not permit any modifications to factor in the changing social composition of the student body at different levels, and do not include the variety of non-formal and informal settings. They remain suggestive data only. Between 1980 and 1988, per-pupil annual average spending on primary education grew indeed in all the countries for which data exist with the sole exception of the former Yugoslavia. Of these 16 countries, the yearly average growth was at 2 per cent or more in nine of them (Austria, Finland, France, Greece, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, and the United States). Turning to the same statistic for secondary education (for Australia and Switzerland the figures combine primary and secondary level spending), 18 countries now come into the frame. Japan (at -0.6 per cent) and Italy (–2.1 per cent) join the former Yugoslavia as countries with declines in spending. In the other ten countries, positive growth was recorded over the 1980 to 1988 period at or above 2 per cent annually in Austria, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, and the United States. More recent data suggest that real growth in per-pupil spending continued, if unevenly, into the early 1990s. In countries for which data are available, average expenditure per student in 1992 adjusted for inflation stood 5.7 per cent higher than in 1988 (OECD, 1996, Table A30).

A different pattern emerges for the costly and most unequal higher education sector. There are now 19 countries and as before, the former Yugoslavia displays clear annual per-student declines. However, now nine of the 19 also show a drop; in several the magnitude is of 2 per cent or more (Belgium, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom) (OECD, 1991*c*, Tables 3.C.9, 3.D.8, 3.E.6). There has been a general trend to curtail the higher education sector. The level of aggregation may nevertheless mask more subtle patterns; it is quite conceivable that offsetting within-sector changes have also occurred. It is possible that within the higher education sector, for instance, the relatively privileged and exclusive programmes have been most protected from the squeeze while the courses and institutions with open access and non-traditional students have been especially hard hit.

A similarly distinct view on equity is provided by "expenditure" as opposed to "participation" in special education. While the very existence of special education is often questioned by those seeking the integration of students with disabilities on educational and social grounds, per-pupil spending in special education is nevertheless far higher than in mainstream schools and significantly greater than integrated placements. The figures can be interpreted as showing the financial wisdom of subsidising integrated places over special education. But they can also be interpreted quite differently as querying the notion of society's lack of commitment to its disabled pupils in special education, at least concerning money spent in these settings. Spending does not tell the whole story, of course, but it offers a counterweight to the blanket accusation that the disabled are always disadvantaged by education systems, and especially when in special education is opposed to mainstream provision.

A compilation of selected country data for an OECD study compares the average per-pupil annual costs of ordinary primary, integrated placements, and special school placements in US dollars respectively. The differences are wide: Australia – 2 150, 4 455, 8 675; Denmark – 3 450, 12 450, 24 550; Italy – 1 895, 5 225, 20 030; Japan – 5 210 and 43 170 (ordinary and special only); Norway – 3 390 and 10 545 (ordinary and special); Portugal – 3 304 and 2065 (integrated and special placements only); Spain – 1 100, 2 125, 8 800; Sweden – 3 965 and 22 120 (ordinary and special); and the United States – 2 500, 7 000, and 37 500 (Labrégère, 1992, p. 47). Presenting these figures as a ratio of the costs per pupil in ordinary primary and in special education settings shows just how much more is spent on the latter. These ratios are (barring Portugal which does not permit the comparison): Australia 4.0, Denmark 7.1, Italy 10.6, Japan 8.3, Norway 3.1, Spain 8.0, Sweden 5.6, United

States 15.0. Given these figures, it is also perfectly reasonable to suggest that the same money spent on special provision will go considerably further when distributed through the mainstream system.

CONCLUSION

Despite the progress in evidence, there are some disconcerting developments in education, society and the economy in many OECD countries. Is a fundamental review now needed?

To conclude this part of the report, the situation of the disadvantaged is becoming more vulnerable and isolated in OECD countries and indeed the expansion of educational opportunities contributes to the isolation. This is due less to lack of genuine access to opportunities, more because it exposes the situation of the unqualified in tightening meritocracies. Increasing employment insecurity pushes vulnerability ever higher through the spectrum of advantage than when additional qualifications were the passport to given labour market destinations. Among the most worrying developments is the speed with which the achievement gains of US African-American and disadvantaged students could be reversed in the face of adverse socio-economic conditions. The data suggest that a trend towards greater social and economic equality in the 1980s appears in only a few countries, with exacerbated inequality in others.

It is nevertheless simplistic to deny signs of positive developments and to abandon the reform endeavour, by maintaining not only that education systems are incapable of realising fairer outcomes, but that educational change is impotent in the face of socio-economic inequalities. It is important to note that there *has* been an opening of learning opportunities in OECD countries, as more individuals advance to new learning experiences. In most countries there has been an improvement in the educational chances of disadvantaged groups, and the progress of women is significant despite the inequities that remain. It is too easy to dismiss the huge investments that OECD countries have made in educational expansion. However, major questions remain after such massive educational investments, and yet many countries still wrestle with the phenomena of educational failure and disenchantment and patently low levels of achievement which lead to dismal life prospects.

Part Two

EDUCATIONAL PATTERNS AND POLICY ISSUES

EQUITY ISSUES IN THE INITIAL PHASE OF EDUCATION

In this chapter and the next, the emphasis shifts from identifying trends to examining some of the contemporary patterns and issues as they arise in the different phases of education and training. As before, country references are illustrative rather than comprehensive, deployed to highlight key areas, accompanied by examples of policy responses. The division between the chapters follows the distinction between the two phases of education corresponding approximately to the years of compulsory and post-compulsory schooling, while recognising that compulsory schooling and the provision involved differ between education systems and that certain of the equity issues identified are not particular to the initial phase alone.

QUALITY SCHOOLING FOR ALL: THE POLICY AGENDA

Equity and quality go hand-in-hand – high quality programmes are wasted without access to and participation in them, while participation in poor quality teaching and learning serves no one well.

Part One demonstrated how improving quality and realising greater equity and equality of opportunity are mutually reinforcing. Emphasizing access and participation without close attention to quality, as if the provision of places and filling of classes alone are the paramount concern, is bound to lead to disappointment. The reassertion that "schools make a difference", maintained by the more positive evaluations and re-evaluations of the educational programmes targeted at the disadvantaged, is founded on a more profound analysis of what makes schools, classes, and learning effective.

This complementarity, if not identity, between promoting quality and equity forms the cornerstone of "policy orientations" that the OECD Ministers agreed on at their 1990 meeting. It is revealing, not only in that it stresses the duality of equity and quality, but also in that it places the catalyst inherent in the initial phase of education within the context of lifelong learning. Just as there has sometimes been a mistaken opposition between quality and equity, so have some perceived a conflict of interests between initial and recurrent education, maintaining that significant investment in initial education must necessarily be at the expense of provision for adults. In reality, success in later learning depends on the foundation of initial schooling. Engendering the abilities and motivation necessary to continue learning throughout a lifetime is an integral part of the school curriculum.

The Ministers put is this way:

> "A high quality start to lifelong learning – the crucial role of initial education and training:
>
> > Without securing the foundation of advanced knowledge and skills, combined with the appetite and the ability to learn afresh, in all youngsters, the other ambitions for education and training will founder. They should seek to provide teaching tailored to the needs of all pupils and students, the gifted as well as the under-achiever, in an ethos of high expectations, application, and co-operative learning. Effective schooling cannot be developed in isolation. Early childhood education is important for subsequent success and so schooling should build on the influential pre-school years. Effective schooling should lay the ground and motivation for continued learning afterwards in all post-compulsory and post-secondary settings. Effectiveness is strengthened through close partnerships with parents, the local community, the employment sector, and other policy agencies. All young people should have access to education and training opportunities – general and vocational – that provide a solid foundation for adult and working life." (OECD, 1992*b*, p. 33)

Questions of access are not irrelevant to this phase of education, despite its compulsory aspect, since the issue is one of access to and participation in high quality provision. At their 1996 meeting, the Ministers emphasized that: in some countries the years of early childhood, identified by the Ministers as especially influential for subsequent success, access is obviously at issue when universal pre-schooling is still not available. The degree to which schooling opens access to further learning is a fundamental criterion of both its quality and its equity. There are also the particularly demanding equity aims of enabling access to and participation in a set of learning opportunities that recognise, even promote, particular cultural and community rights over and above the universal aims of teaching and learning applicable to all. Ministers affirm their commitment to achieving a broadly-based and effective foundation for lifelong learning at the primary and secondary levels – whether academic or vocational – from which no one is excluded (OECD, 1996, p. 22).

In times of budgetary constraints, with choices to be made over the deployment of scarce resources, a focus on high quality education *for all* might seem unrealistically expensive. Educationists have often been more reluctant than politicians to face up to the resource implications of well-designed solutions. It is essential to recognise that the ambitious (if necessary) agenda to secure educational excellence together with social justice will not come cheaply. This means that access to quality must not be sacrificed for quantitative reasons. An intensive high-quality start with well-resourced schools imbued with a culture of learning may well reap far greater dividends in the long run than an ever-widening extension of provision if much of that is mediocre, especially for pupils who have difficulty succeeding. These are the pupils with neither the "social capital", in Coleman's phrase, nor the material resources to rectify any educational lack as some of their more privileged classmates may do.

THE PERSISTING IMPACT OF THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT ON EDUCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE

Social, home and educational factors combine to explain educational disadvantage. Such factors tend to be located in particular spatial and geographical settings that may also be the focus of policy action. Educational reforms need a spatial, residential, and "macro" dimension to complement the "micro" focus on schools, classrooms and teachers.

The UK statement included a review of (mainly British) research findings describing the meaning, identification, and responses to educational disadvantage. Chapter Two's discussion of the socio-economic environment did not extend to the influence it exercises on the educational lives of pupils and students – the ways and mechanisms through which the broad environment works to shape the experiences and achievements of those in school. This complementary focus is now provided (the following paragraphs are abridged from the UK review by Smith, 1990*b*).

Almost since quantitative measurement of educational performance began in the early part of this century, systematic low levels of performance or under-achievement by particular groups have been the subject of study. It is perhaps only since World War II, with the rise of social, psychological, and environmental explanations to rival and replace earlier genetic theories for such systematic under-achievement, that this has become the focus for educational policy. This concern with *group* under-achievement (significantly below average performance by the group) should be distinguished from *individual* under-achievement, tackled by conventional remedial work.

Despite attempts to provide an overarching explanation, the net cast by a term such as "educational disadvantage" is too wide to be explained by a single theory. Instead, a series of components or elements can be identified as all contributory, individually and through their interaction together: home and parental contributions; social, environmental, and economic factors; and school and individual variables. First, home and parental influences on educational achievement have sometimes been exaggerated as if they are entirely deterministic of later outcomes; it is nevertheless difficult to pretend that these do not affect the pupil in school. However, the way in which they affect young people is undoubtedly complex. It is therefore necessary to distinguish cultural differences from practices or behaviour that is the result of pressure or constraint on disadvantaged families. Even then, it is necessary to avoid the blanket assumption that those practices which inhibit achievement – whether they are different home conditions, environments, parental control styles, or factors influencing motivation and willingness to learn – are necessarily pathological. They may, in fact, be rational adaptations to the circumstances, albeit with negative consequences.

Beyond these more individually-based accounts for under-achievement are the more social explanations. Social factors work in at least two different ways. First, they directly affect socialisation conditions, even when (Essen and Wedge, 1982) the non-material conditions of the home are relatively favourable. Adverse social conditions appear to depress all score levels, rather than acting as a straightforward threshold. Second, even if ability and performance levels between social groups could be equalised, there would still be differential rates of success in terms of qualifications and retention rates in education between the different groups. This is due in part to such factors as lack of motivation, lower persistence and parental support, and reduced expectations on the part of all concerned, including teachers. Perceptions of the wider opportunity structure are also important; different calculations, for example, are done by students and their families in order to measure the advantages of remaining in full-time education beyond the minimum requirement age. These are socially patterned. Once again, calculations of "low added value" may not always be irrational when viewed from the vantage point of the pupil or student.

The interaction between home background and school experience is also complex. Tizard and Hughes (1984), for instance, suggest that middle class nursery children received more reinforcement and "extension" from staff than the working class group – perhaps no more than staff responding to apparently brighter and more out-going children. Studies of school entry performance, however, suggest that disadvantaged children make initial spurts on entering school, at least as measured on formal tests. This may be the result of an expanding horizon, new vocabulary, and greater experience of working with unfamiliar adults.

Given the broad coverage of the notion of "educational disadvantage", and the non-deterministic and interactive way that all the factors interplay to influence outcomes, there is no single route suggested by the research to identify and reach the disadvantaged. There is also a spatial element at work, in terms of the geographic distribution of all these factors. Selecting areas has proven to be an inefficient way of reaching the individually disadvantaged, despite the concentrations of "at risk" children in inner city areas. Studies also show a significant degree of mobility in and out of disadvantaged categories. Much depends on the type of programme envisaged and the likely target population. Some policies can only realistically operate at an area or school level, while others can be directed at individuals. The increased knowledge gleaned from research is suggestive of more sophisticated and successful means of identifying target groups and policies; that same sophistication undermines simple or universal measures of the disadvantaged, its causes, and appropriate measures for all circumstances.

The spatial and residential aspects of educational disadvantage take on particular relevance in the light of socio-economic developments. As OECD countries experience widening disparities – growing affluence for some alongside long-term unemployment, a halt to the narrowing of earnings differentials (even their widening in some cases) – so the complex nexuses of variables that explain under-achievement and educational disadvantage come to be associated with particular areas and neighbourhoods. Coleman's notion of "social capital" also stresses the *community* as both a key aspect of understanding disadvantage and as a focus for policy action. To be effective, it must inevitably go beyond the purely educational in order to bring in the full variety of social, economic, and welfare services and policies and in integrated ways. Housing policy, for example, is critical in terms of delineating patterns of poverty and the residential distribution of social problems, including educational failure and under-achievement.

Solutions might be most appropriately located in the midst of a set of local policies based on existing communities – in contrast to transporting pupils and students out of disadvantaged communities, and thereby depriving those neighbourhoods even more by taking away their most valuable resources: their young people. Besides, "bussing" can bring its own problems for the youngsters concerned, as the German "at risk" statement points out:

> "One measure which on first view seems obvious has proved to be practicable only in very limited scale – this is the transport of young people from economically depressed regions to prosperous ones. When trying this, it showed up soon that these young people face a broad spectrum of new problems with respect to their social situation in the new environment and especially with respect to accommodation, which is extremely expensive in regions like Munich or Stuttgart." (OECD/AR, Germany, p. 35)

However, stressing the importance of locating educational policies in a broader set of policies and services is not pessimistically to maintain that no educational progress is possible in the absence of general socio-economic change, which would amount to a manifesto for inactivity. It is, however, a reminder that organisational and educational reforms need a spatial, residential, and "macro" dimension and not simply a micro-variables dimension of individual schools, classrooms, and teachers, even if ultimately it is at the teaching/learning interface where change must occur. It is also to underline that some geographical settings should be "educational priority areas" for educational action, as indeed some countries already recognise through their policies and resourcing.

ORGANISATIONAL AND SCHOOLING ISSUES

School effectiveness is integral to issues of disadvantage in at least two ways. It is especially important for those whose social and/or home backgrounds are weak in learning resources to receive quality schooling. The issue is now less "what?" but "how?", especially in deprived areas. Organisationally, the outstanding equity issue used to be that of selection. However, it was soon realised that a simple choice between selective and comprehensive systems was not enough. Much depends on school and classroom activities, for differing social and economic circumstances as well as gender.

In two of these three dimensions of educational disadvantage – home background and social conditions – educational authorities are frequently powerless to effect change. Close co-operation with other agencies may enhance policy influence, but even then it is constrained. Much of what takes place in the relatively private world of family upbringing, for instance, lies outside the normal sphere of significant official influence, and many would agree that in the interests of individual liberty it should remain so. The third dimension – educational organisation and school variables – is, however, much closer to the reach of policy influence. That it constitutes only one part of the puzzle is a reminder that important limits exist to any hypothesised change from reform in this sphere alone. Yet, this is where the drive for improvement must begin.

Much recent attention given to the organisation of schooling has focused on the promotion of effectiveness, which is integral to addressing disadvantage in at least two major ways. First, it is especially important for pupils from less advantaged backgrounds to receive a quality education to the extent that family and social background are not rich in learning resources. Second, the realisation of effective schooling is likely to be especially difficult to sustain in problem areas where neither the schools nor the districts tend to attract the most qualified teachers.

The precise criteria of effectiveness identified in research and policy documents vary, though with considerable overlap of detail. The ten identified in the OECD publication *Schools and Quality* (OECD, 1989*c*, pp. 126-127) are:

- a commitment to clearly and commonly identified norms and goals;
- collaborative planning, shared decision-making, and collegial work in a frame of experimentation and evaluation;
- positive leadership in initiating and maintaining improvement;
- staff stability;

- a strategy for continuing staff development related to each school's pedagogical and organisational needs;
- working to a carefully planned and co-ordinated curriculum that ensures sufficient place for each student to acquire essential knowledge and skills;
- a high level of parental involvement and support;
- the pursuit and recognition of school-wide rather than individual values;
- maximum use of learning time; and
- the active and substantial support of the responsible education authority.

Schools in disadvantaged areas with underprivileged students which attained all or most of these would certainly be providing a sound platform for learning to those students and for active life thereafter.

The *selection* issue has been especially important at the lower secondary level. The argument that selection at age 11/12 was premature and socially biased was a driving force in the switch from an institutionally diverse, selective system to one organised along comprehensive lines in many countries. Not all countries followed the "common school" path: "in a few countries (...) with strongly entrenched selective patterns of education, comprehensive schooling never took root; on the contrary, it was strongly resisted. This was particularly the case in Austria, the majority of the *Länder* in Germany and Switzerland, who saw the comprehensive school as a threat to the very foundations of their well-established and highly successful "dual systems" (Papadopoulos, 1993, p. 90). These are systems that are frequently admired, especially regarding the status and "comprehensiveness" of initial vocational preparation. In this sense, there has recently been some revision of opinion on the merits of selection and differentiation. At the very least, there is greater recognition that instituting a nominal comprehensive secondary system is no panacea for social selection and inequity. Much depends on the genuine comprehensiveness of the schools and curricula available and the degree to which less overt forms of selection are allowed to persist, forms that may actually be more difficult to address than those under selective regimes since they are more hidden within the recesses of schools.

OECD reports already reflected a more nuanced view of the link between educational organisation and equity by the early 1980s (see OECD, 1983), as summarised in the background report prepared for the 1984 meeting of OECD Ministers of Education:

> "It might be inferred that a sharp polarisation exists between countries that have opted to retain selection and those that have opted for the common school. In fact, the crux is how much differentiation occurs within individual schools and when it begins. In practice, common schools vary considerably in

the way they distribute pupils and groups and apply the curriculum." (OECD, 1985, p. 66)

In many respects, such a realisation manifests the same "coming of age" of educational thought as did the reassessment of the widespread question "does education make a difference?". There are no simple blanket formulae to ensure that education is rendered fairer and more effective. It all depends on what actually takes place in schools and classrooms, and the quality of the learning and provision made available. There are no shortcuts to educational equity.

This is not to say that the evidence vindicates those systems which maintain early selection of social bias. It is simply to point out that in many cases the school arrangements that replaced them had not in fact resolved the issue of selection or the inherent bias. Research had, however, vindicated comprehensive systems of a common counter-argument of which they stood accused by traditionalists, namely that they fostered mediocrity and undermined the achievement levels of the most gifted. In comparing test results of the top percentiles in science across different countries, for example, no clear relation is evident between the degree of selectivity in operation and the performance levels of a given proportion of gifted pupils and students (Husen, 1983). However, far from reducing interest in the questions at stake, exploring these complex relationships has increasingly brought them to the forefront.

Part of this interest has taken the form of investigating the different patterns of classroom interaction as they affect certain sections of the student population. There is, for instance, a nexus of gender issues here giving rise to a flourishing field of study concerning the ways in which different forms of *gender* inequalities are perpetuated through the educational practices and arrangements taking place in schools. Concerning the disadvantages experienced by girls and young women, much attention has focused on the different teacher/pupil interactions and school arrangements as they affect the sexes and the persisting female under-achievement and attainment in technological subjects, despite their clear aggregate progress overall. There has long been a drive in many countries to address curriculum gender issues of content and presentation and to eliminate stereotyping. Concerning male disadvantages, a widespread finding is that the section of the student population most at odds with the aims and culture of schools are disaffected males, whose life prospects are particularly bleak as a result. From cultural traditions as distinct as those in Scandinavia and Southern Europe, this is a common pattern. The Finnish statement points to a typical finding: "In all grades, boys repeat grades more often than girls. In other ways too, boys have more problems than girls. Boys usually develop more slowly. One manifestation of this is that boys made up 70 per cent of the 1 350 pupils who were allowed to postpone their school-going by one year in 1990". Precisely the same proportion is mentioned in the Spanish submission concerning non-school attenders and the programmes attempting to meet the problem.

Repeating, streaming and tracking

There is little evidence of gains from homogeneous ability groupings in schools, but rather a high risk of social segregation and educational stigma. In some systems, significant differences in educational achievement are directly related to inequalities of provision and school quality. Particular problems arise when school vocational, and especially pre-vocational, tracks are repositories of the most extreme forms of educational disadvantage. Should one therefore conclude that it is necessary to eliminate tracking as inherently unequal and inequitable? Or should the possibility for diversity be maintained, though with dead-end tracks eliminated, with the weight of official effort then behind the equalisation of the different curricular options?

The importance for equity in organisational arrangements within education, and recognition of the need to move beyond blanket distinctions such as "selective" and "non-selective", have also brought the focus on the effects of programmatic and classroom arrangements such as *repeating, streaming and tracking*. And just as research has in general failed to discover any educational advantages to differentiated (*i.e.* selective) institutional arrangements which might have been expected from the narrowing of the ability range and its consequent focusing, educational literature has not lent support for differentiated classroom treatment, dividing pupils artificially on the putative basis of ability, if that means access to learning of widely differing quality. The fact is that any eventual learning gains through focusing on pupils of similar achievement levels seem to be more than offset by a teacher, pupil, and parent consensus about which programmes are of value and which are dead-end tracks.

The review by Lafontaine (1991) assembles some of this research from different systems and traditions. He quotes US research on the subject of streaming and ability grouping:

> "Measures should be taken to discourage not only the establishment of 'ghetto' classes, consisting mainly of immigrant children, but also of sets (homogeneous groups). The most recent meta-analyses indicate that the establishment of such classes has absolutely none of the expected beneficial effects. According to Slavin (1987, 1990) there is practically no difference in performance between classes with homogeneous grouping and classes with heterogeneous grouping. Nor is there any interaction with the 'standard' of the students (with homogeneous grouping being beneficial to above-average students and detrimental to below-average students). In Slavin's view, there is therefore no reason to rely on an approach that is ineffective from an

> educational standpoint and which may well be detrimental from a psychological standpoint (the stigma of belonging to a below-average group) (pp. 16-17)."

He also reports French research on the practice of repeating classes which shows that when a comparison is made of careers of students of an equal academic standard, those who have not repeated are in general more successful (Duru-Bellat, 1988).

Findings of a more generally applicable kind are reported by Lafontaine which provide a significant qualification to the sociological lament of the seventies: schools make no difference. They show how, contrary to the conclusion attributed to Coleman in his much-cited 1966 report that little tangible variation in outcomes could be attributed to aspects of the schools themselves – a conclusion that seemed to indicate the impotence of the educational reform endeavour – Belgian and French studies had found the opposite to be the case:

> "In the survey mentioned earlier, the rate of variance between classes was as high as 42 per cent. Somewhat surprisingly, the magnitude of these differences is not, or only to a very slight extent (4-0 per cent), due to the pattern of 'recruitment' of students (from more or less advantaged backgrounds). Commenting on this, Grisay (p. 13) says, 'Unquestionably, it is sad to think that most of the variations in performance between schools is probably due mainly to qualitative differences in the teaching they provide; however, the findings of the survey strongly support this conclusion. Nonetheless, one positive result is that this obliges us to take a critical look at what they are doing'. Research carried out in France by Mingat has, moreover, yielded very similar findings." (p. 7)

This finding is not universal; much depends on the extent to which systems have equalised the conditions and programmes in their schools.

The promotion of diversity and choice must take account of any widening of inequalities that may ensue. Some of the evidence already cited is from Belgium, which was the subject of a recent educational review under OECD auspices. While many of the issues identified in the course of that examination are not peculiar to that country, it nevertheless allows a concrete illustration of two of the prominent equity issues emerging from the foregoing discussion: the impact of organisational differences in the schooling on offer; and the importance of ensuring that the vocational education provided, especially in these influential early years, is not a "poor cousin" track, "cooling out" its students to an early departure from learning with a low probability of return at a later stage.

The problems of the repeaters and the high disparities tolerated between institutions and internal systems is not something that concerned only the OECD external examiners; the official background study identified the same problems and in refreshingly candid terms. In so doing, it drew attention to the general problem of technical and vocational education being offered in "second class" tracks.

> "Technical education (and to an even greater extent, vocational education) has an incidence of repeats which is noticeably higher than in general academic education (...). To a large extent, these disparities reveal a phenomenon of orientation because of failure of pupils towards technical and vocational streams. Furthermore, the percentage of repeaters is higher in the official networks than in the free subsidised network, which may be explained by the differences in recruitment and types of syllabuses (the student population is, on average, more 'favoured' in free subsidised education; the official subsidised network offers mainly technical and vocational education where the incidence of repeats is higher). Finally, the percentage of repeaters differs noticeably from one establishment to another, even between schools in the same network and with similar student populations." (Belgium Ministries of Education, 1991, p. 176)

Vocational tracks and programmes, especially in systems which allow such specialisation already in the compulsory cycles of education, thus face particular problems insofar as they are regarded as a "dumping ground" for educational failure. Lafontaine (*op. cit.*, p. 10) confirms this point: "Transfer to these streams [vocational and pre-vocational] is clearly considered by all those involved as a sign of underachievement and, in fact, is a far more serious consequence than repeating which, at this stage in a student's education, at least allows them the chance of 'redeeming themselves' and continuing their careers in a comparatively 'noble' stream. In education systems under pressure to be responsive to economic change and relevant to the post-school world it is quite contradictory for those tracks which are most attuned – the vocational – to be the least recognised, if not actually stigmatised".

The worst problems are concentrated in the pre-vocational tracks which, by their very nature and purpose, are for those who are considered as in need of remedial education prior to engaging in a full vocational programme. The German statement also identified this problem (OECD/EAP, Germany, p. 25). Foreigners, while being under-represented in many of the more advanced forms of vocational and technical education, are over-represented in the pre-vocational year ("some 40 per cent of those attending these courses are not German nationals"). But while the concentration of problems in the pre-vocational year might suggest that this is a genuine reflection of aptitudes and abilities, the OECD examiners of the education system in Belgium rejected this explanation. They expressed the problem through a section heading of their report: "Vocational training: the poor relation". They were convinced that unfair selection was occurring with little justification in learning potential:

> "(...) the 'vocational' system begins in the 2nd year of secondary schooling when it receives pupils from the 'transition' class and also those who have been eliminated from the general education course after only one year. The aptitudes and motivation of these pupils to acquire a vocational skill play only a very small role in this guidance process which is essentially negative". (p. 64)

The general issue raised concerns the existence of tracks (under a variety of names depending on the system in question) which function more to "cool out" various disadvantaged students than to offer a real diversity of educational opportunity. It illustrates starkly that focusing on the equity issues of selection are relevant today, even if it is the track rather than the institution in question.

So overwhelming is this "cooling out" function that it leads some to the conclusion that all tracking should be eliminated. In the United States, whose school system (in practice, many systems) differs greatly from those in France, Belgium, and Germany, a current equity programme puts the elimination of tracking at the heart of its proposals for the reform of US schooling by the year 2000 in an analysis that is very similar to those already cited:

> "Poor and minority students are frequently victims of a system that holds them to lower standards than other students. The pernicious policy of academic tracking – so common in most schools and school systems – makes judgements on student abilities based on socio-economic, racial, or ethnic status, with the result that students are put into dead-end school career paths that lock them out of a chance to attend college." (The College Board, 1993, p. 2)

However, this constitutes a major dilemma and choice for policy. Should these tracks be eliminated, on observing the socially selective nature and low standing of some programmes? This seems logical, but there is always the likelihood that a more uniform formal structure will only hide more implicit forms of differentiation. And, as demonstrated with the introduction of comprehensive secondary schools in OECD countries, the selectivity involved may become all the more intractable.

However, if curriculum differentiation is nevertheless viewed as desirable in order to offer a range of learning options, policy should support equalising the quality and standing of the tracks themselves, instead of steering individuals to one track or another. This may necessitate compensatory financing and differential teacher rewards for those tracks and settings that suffer the worst problems of poor reputation and standing. In some countries, such diversity would clash with the existence of a common curriculum in compulsory schooling, but even in such systems, specialisation and diversification must begin at some stage. At that point, the same issues arise concerning the most appropriate response to promote equity.

EQUITY ISSUES IN SPECIFIC AREAS OF POLICY ACTION

Integration of the disabled into mainstream schooling is a particular and potentially radical interpretation of equality of opportunity. How well has this policy thrust survived where there is greater influence of choice and market mechanisms in schooling? Whether the policy targets are identified groups, schools or geographic areas, it is necessary to concentrate efforts and resources to maximise effects. The more that quality and equity are considered different emphases of the same endeavour, the more the pursuit of equity should be incorporated into mainstream educational improvement rather than located in the domain of "special measures".

Integrating the disabled into mainstream schools is founded on the notion of *entitlement*: all children have the right of access to participate in an education that is available to the rest of society. This is often proposed irrespective of whether they have the talents to achieve in those mainstream settings to the same levels as their classmates (hence it is not a meritocratic aim) or whether the outcomes achieved are necessarily superior to what might be possible under separate provision. It is thus fundamentally anti-exclusionary, even though there may be other educational reasons for separate treatment. The equity arguments for integration are thus framed more in the language of equality of opportunity than in that of outcomes. This distinction may, however, be more emphatic than substantive. Advocates of full integration will maintain that equality of opportunity has only been approached when outcomes for the disabled are both a proper reflection of their talents (the meritocratic ideal, reframed) and are distributed as nearly as possible in the same way as those of their classmates.

It is a field of policy development inspired by a complexity of aims. And it is essentially open-ended since, like improving the quality of education or realising greater equity, there is always room for more in realising the ideal. The claims of the disabled compete with many different sets of claims from other sections of the pupil and student population whose rights may be just as hard to ignore. Resources are critical, but they can hardly be the determining factor when per capita costs for integrated provision in mainstream education are lower than in specially designated and separate settings. The question of integration also crucially concerns the reorganisation of the curriculum and the teaching/learning interface itself, as it has consequences for all pupils and teachers, and not only the disabled.

The 1992 OECD review on the interpretation of and development towards integration points to the equity issues at stake and to differential experiences:

> "Establishing and implementing the principle that the disabled are as entitled to an education as their able-bodied peers, is the first step towards integration. Accepting this principle carries with it both an obligation on the part of the authorities either to provide the necessary facilities or to ensure that these facilities exist. On the whole, Member countries have legislated that a right to

> education exists for disabled school age children. In theory, therefore, the administrative obligations are fulfilled in Member countries but even at this basic level there is great diversity of the application of this principle in practice.
>
> Several countries seem to have created the conditions for greater equality of access. Italy guarantees a disabled pupil's integration in an ordinary class, which means that this depends on the places available for non-disabled and disabled pupils alike within the education system as a whole, that a sufficient number exist in most regions. United States federal law obliges States to provide handicapped youngsters with a free and appropriate public education and expressly allows parents to take the State to court should it fail to do so. This has resulted in wider access. Japan gave the prefectures time to make the necessary arrangements by not implementing the Compulsory Education Order of November 1973 until April 1979. Sufficient places are available in the Scandinavian countries thanks to the enormous effort made to set up a wide range of facilities, which has enabled management to be so precise that in 1988, for instance, only eight children were unable, for reasons that were known but insurmountable, to participate in any form of education. Countries such as Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, (...) Germany and Switzerland also appear to have enough places in special and ordinary schools to honour a child's right to education.
>
> In other countries, the gap between the principle of equality of access and its universal application is relatively wide. There would seem to be several reasons for this, the main one being probably lack of resources. This applies to a number of countries which, often for economic reasons, have made little provision for special education and which view its future expansion above all in terms of expensive placements (in institutions) for the children not yet catered for (frequently those with the most serious disabilities). On the other hand, some like Spain, have carefully programmed the expansion of their provision, which is increasingly spectacularly every year while also improving rapidly in quality. Others, such as Portugal, do not seem to have been as ambitious, although in some instances they compensate partly for the lack of provision by paying allowances to parents who can then in theory hire private tutors to educate their children at home." (Labrégère, 1992, pp. 23-24)

Even in this review, there is still room to question how far the rights that exist in legislation and in theory become translated in practice, not just in exemplary settings but in the full gamut of ordinary schools and classrooms.

The notion of entitlement embedded in the aim to integrate the disabled into mainstream classes and schools raises fundamental questions of educational philosophy and practice. Is it possible, for instance, to adhere to a single principle – that of integration – when the "disabled" covers a wide-range of situations, conditions, and disabilities? Is integration a strategy to realise equity aims or is it an end in itself? Furthermore, how well has integration policy survived in the midst of de-regulation and market mechanisms in schooling, especially through the promotion of parental choice as to the school attended by their children? Do the essentially selfish motives of parents for their own children's success conflict with the entitlements of the disabled? These questions all require attention.

The second specific area of policy response considered in this section concerns the *priority targeting of particular areas and schools* as requiring additional support. In fact, this label covers a wide range of policy instruments and most all countries operate with some forms of targeting which may or may not be described in terms of "priority areas". As above, this targeting may be based on categories of disadvantage in individual pupils, rather than on recognisable areas or even schools. The range of country experiences in this regard is extensive, so that only a small number of illustrative national examples are necessary to demonstrate some of the issues and experiences that arise (see OECD, 1995*c*).

A notable aspect of the Educational Priority Policy programme in the *Netherlands* is its dual nature. First, it is comprehensive in coverage in that all pupils receive a weighting according to the category of disadvantage to which they belong, which helps determine their level of staffing. (Pupils with at least one parent judged to be of low educational or occupational level = 1.25; this rises to 1.9 if the parent belonging to this category was born abroad in a list of specified countries; bargees' children receive a 1.4 weighting; those of travellers = 1.7.) "A school's specification of pupil weightings determines the number of teachers to which that school is entitled. Thus if at a particular school all pupils have a weighting of 1.9, that school will have twice as many teachers as a school where all pupils have a weighting of 1.0" (Kloprogge, 1991, p. 3). This applies at the primary school level only; secondary schools may only be allocated additional funds for certain categories of ethnic minority students.

There is, however, an additional targeting to this comprehensive focus: geographical targeting through a limited number of areas designated "educational priority areas".

> "Educational priority areas are local or regional co-operative networks of schools and welfare institutions. The underlying idea is that in some inner-city areas, towns and regions there is an accumulation of disadvantaging factors which should be dealt with in a concerted effort. The co-operative network comprises primary schools, secondary schools, and (usually, but not necessarily) special schools, public libraries, community centres and other welfare institutions. Schools are only allowed to participate in a priority area if they have a relatively high proportion of disadvantaged pupils. Priority areas have a governing board on which all participating schools and welfare institutions are represented. Per annum they receive about NGL 1 million in subsidies. A

> portion of these funds is used to appoint a co-ordinator, who is responsible for the preparation and execution of an 'area plan'." (*ibid.*, pp. 3-4)

A number of target groups are embraced by the policy: immigrant and minority pupils, with special attention to the situation of girls, as well as the traditionally disadvantaged among native Dutch pupils.

The complex relations between comprehensive formulae and specific targeting have emerged in evaluations of the *United States* Chapter 1 Program, which is the federal government's largest investment in elementary and secondary schooling serving one in nine of school-age children in the United States (National Assessment of Chapter 1 Program Independent Review Panel, 1993). In its summary of "Where Chapter 1 dollars go", the following intended and unintended effects are stressed:

- although the purpose of Chapter 1 is to break the link between poverty and low achievement, especially in districts with concentrations of poverty, more than 90 per cent of all school districts and over 70 per cent of public elementary schools receive Chapter 1 funds under the current formula;
- fourteen per cent of high-poverty elementary schools receive no Chapter 1 funding, and one-third of the low-achieving children (who score at the 35th percentile or below on reading tests) in elementary schools with poverty rates over 75 per cent do not receive Chapter 1 services;
- funding formulae that allocate more money on the basis of low-achieving students create a disincentive for schools to demonstrate achievement gains;
- because Chapter 1 funds are allocated to counties based on census data, areas that experience large demographic shifts may be underfunded or overfunded until new census data are released; and
- the current use of state average per-pupil expenditures as an adjustment for geographic differences in the cost of education has been criticised for underestimating costs in low-income, low-expenditure states – thus providing the neediest states and districts with less federal assistance (*ibid.*, p. 48).

The general thrust of this review is clearly that important issues of targeting disadvantage still need to be resolved.

PIPSE is a programme implemented in *Portugal* in specific areas suffering particular features of educational failure. It is neither purely educational nor specifically local as it is based on a co-ordinated analysis of, and response to, the outstanding problems and seen as a springboard for changing the national educational culture. The programme involves both national and local co-ordination, as suggested by its title – the Inter-ministerial Programme for the Promotion of Educational Achievement. As with the Dutch programme, it focuses on the basic start

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provided in the initial phase of education. It is based on an in-depth initial analysis of the problems and requires an on-going evaluation of each area's progress as an in-built part of its functioning. And, as elsewhere, co-ordinated approaches are followed involving the other welfare ministries and services at the national and local levels, where it is managed by the school principal. Its combination of curriculum reform *and* additional resources is also interesting, including supplementary support (in 1991 there were 700 monitor teachers under the PIPSE programme at an average of two per borough). The geographic dimension stressed earlier in the chapter was eventually recognised as a key part of the overall approach, in terms of the sheer isolation of some schools with the greatest concentration of problems (hence the Ministry of Planning and Territorial Administration was one of the six involved) and in terms of the wide disparities of educational resources and social capital between localities. These difficulties may concern the isolated rural area as much as blighted inner cities, which receive most of the attention of policy commentary.

The initial evaluations give a sense of the achievements as well as the problem of "residual failure" that the programme has been unable to eliminate:

- whenever new boroughs joined the programme, there was a remarkably significant increase in the number of passes at the end of the year, namely 10.9 per cent, 7 per cent and 1.5 per cent respectively;
- in the following year, this improvement remained stable, which means that the improvement was maintained but not increased;
- as the boroughs with the highest failure rate joined the programme, the improvement shown in the first year decreased; and
- the final result is a rebalance of school passes in all the boroughs of the country averaging between 70 and 75 per cent, and only rarely surpassing 80 per cent.

What can be concluded from these comments? First and foremost, there is no doubt whatsoever that a large part of the previous school failures was due to the isolation of such schools and disregard for their problems. An emergency programme which drew attention to these schools and solved the most scandalous aspects of their position, produced immediate and, in some cases, spectacular results. Thus the main quantitative result of the programme was the elimination of the most serious differences between boroughs. However, in all cases, there is still a residual failure rate which would seem difficult to stamp out. (OECD/COHERENCE, 1991, p. 5)

The clear public recognition that very wide inter-school differences of resources are unacceptable serves as an example to those systems which tolerate such inequalities. The fact that problems remain, even when this is addressed, is a further reminder of the need for realism when determining the targets by which to assess a programme's success – so as not to expect total change as the relevant criterion of success. Another national example of priority targeting and funding is the ZEP (*zone d'éducation prioritaire*) in France. It is also aimed at the initial phase of education in small geographical areas based on educational disadvantage. It requires establishments to present coherent plans of cultural and educational improvement for approval, and guarantees additional resources for teaching allotted on a 3-year basis. As with the Netherlands, the existence of a special co-ordinator, responsible for the animation and implementation of the ZEP plan, is a key additional ingredient to ensure the effective use of the committed resources.

There is thus no single model of targeted programmes. They cover a wide range of formulae and mechanisms. They may apply across an entire country, concentrate on specific areas, or do both. It is important to concentrate attention so that desirable change actually takes place and so that additional resources are used effectively. It is also necessary to generalise the task of overcoming disadvantage so that it is a national priority rather than simply isolated "compensatory" measures. Indeed, the more this becomes sustained and generalised, the less the word "compensation" is appropriate, with its connotation of handing over something over and above the normal. And the more that quality and equity are seen as different emphases of the same educational endeavour, the more equity will be incorporated into the mainstream support for educational improvement rather than into the domain of "special measures".

These points align with findings from the summary of British research findings in this field (Smith, 1990*b*, p. 33):

> "There are no magical solutions or programmes that provide a once and for all massive boost to performance as had originally been confidently predicted. Where there have been gains, they have often been modest and short term. Nor is there a 'magic age'. The early stress on the pre-school years has given way to a more balanced assessment of the possibility of successful intervention at many age points. There may, however, be critical points where for social or institutional reasons there are stronger chances of success (...).
>
> Though the initial high expectations have not been met, a number of programmes have had a measured and sometimes sustained effect. Often this has become apparent as evaluators move away from global measures and methods of assessment and related their assessments closely to programme objectives and content. With some of the large scale programmes it was first necessary to be sure that the programmes had indeed been implemented effectively and were actually reaching the target group. The persistent message that emerges from these finer grain studies is that specific programmes have often very specific effects. The simple assumption of easily achieved 'knock on' effects is not supported by this evidence.

> Recent research on school effectiveness has shifted the emphasis away from special programmes or other additives to changes and improvements in the core programme. Studies here suggest that the most effective schools may substantially raise the relative performance of disadvantaged groups. The most recent studies, however, suggest that these effects may vary by subject and by group within schools rather than be a single 'school effect'. Nor is it yet clear from this research how schools can become 'more effective'."

CONCLUDING REMARKS: EQUITY, QUALITY, EFFECTIVENESS

Teachers are as in most all educational matters at the core of things, raising the issues of teacher professionalism, recruitment, as well as the organisation of teaching and teacher training. The challenge to promote school effectiveness is now to identify how the desired institutional characteristics can be generalised system-wide.

The curriculum and the nature of the teaching/learning interface are at the heart of the matter. Far from the exclusive domain of traditionalist concerns about raising basic standards, they are at the core of any serious attempt to address the nature of equity, access, and participation that a school system affords. At the same time, what is the impact of those policies and practices that seek quality improvement in equity terms? Have standards of achievement risen or fallen for traditionally low achievers? This chapter has also raised the possible conflict between policies designed to enhance parental choice, with quality enhancement as their rationale, and the endeavour to integrate the disabled fully into schooling. But the issue is more general than this: has the drive of the past decade or more to raise quality (see OECD, 1989*c*) widened achievement gaps, especially where policies have introduced quasi-markets in schooling that are likely to favour most the already-strong? This chapter argues that were this to be the case, it would fall well short of the Ministerial ambition to extend high-quality learning opportunities to all pupils and students.

In emphasizing quality and effectiveness, it is thereby necessary to shift focus and move beyond identifying the characteristics of effectiveness – the lists, more or less detailed, of the features of those institutions or classes that "work". These play a valuable role in pinpointing the specific aims necessary for local institutional settings and in emphasizing where change must occur ("the school as the heart of the matter" as expressed in the concluding chapter of the OECD publication *Schools and Quality*). However, this approach risks augmenting the already large list of desired school-level characteristics, without tackling what is clearly the next stage: elaborating the implications for its implementation at the regional and national levels, so that the ingredients of "what works" are put in place in all schools. For example, if a strong negative impact of high teacher turnover in problem schools is found, from which a whole set of other difficulties derive in the absence of a sustained professional input, then the call for effectiveness is clearly falling well short if it is content to merely reiterate how important the presence of a committed teacher body is for school success. The issue then becomes how to generalise the micro-level characteristics of effectiveness system-wide, in this case a stable staff of teachers. This would most likely be a far-reaching enterprise, addressing the real issue of generalising the micro features of successful schooling at the macro level.

SELECTED EQUITY ISSUES IN POST-COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The thread of the argument is that initial, post-compulsory, post-secondary, and continuing education and provision should be considered and calculated into the policy equation together. There is a common tendency for deliberation and planning to concentrate on the specific problems and issues of particular sectors, thereby neglecting the bigger picture, where the interplay of all these education and training worlds come into play. This chapter does not provide a comprehensive review of policy issues pertaining to the years following the initial phase of organised learning.

POST-COMPULSORY AND THIRD-LEVEL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The problematic status of some vocational branches continues at these levels, though certain general and "open access" courses are also falling behind. Diversification and strengthened hierarchies raise new issues of access and equity.

Some of the same issues and problems of the earlier phase recur immediately following the end of compulsory schooling. The OECD report on curriculum organisation and choices at the upper secondary level highlights the generally problematic status of vocational training and the tracks most closely aligned to the employment field (OECD, 1989*b*). It describes how the tendency to steer low achievers and/or low-ability students towards vocational courses has frequently counteracted efforts to raise the status and prestige of vocational credentials. But, these are not the only developments that reveal the inherent difficulties in achieving egalitarian goals.

> "At first sight, for example, the fact that some countries have succeeded in recent years in having middle-class students in certain vocational streams and a higher proportion of working class students in general education may be viewed as a positive development. However different conclusions can be drawn when it is seen that quite often the privileged groups tend to concentrate on those vocational streams which open up better opportunities for employment, whereas many of the less privileged groups enrol in general education as a

> second choice, because of the lack of places in the more rewarding selective vocational options. Such developments reveal the importance of student strategies – particularly from the middle and upper social strata – in maintaining an advantaged position." (*op. cit.*, p. 10)

Though avoided by the more privileged strata, the quality, resourcing, and outcomes of such programmes are just as important.

It would be too simplistic, therefore, to assert that all programmes with a clear employment relevance suffer low prestige and relative down-grading compared with the avowedly academic. In some respects, the opposite is true with advanced, short-cycle technological programmes, for instance, preferred over the more theoretical branches. As labour market difficulties for post-compulsory and post-secondary graduates have become more entrenched and their prospects no longer assured, the high-level technical and vocational streams have become increasingly appealing. New hierarchies are establishing themselves, and it is a matter of empirical evaluation to ascertain whether the fortunes of the different trainee and student groups improve or not in the process. In some countries, the hierarchy might take the following form, starting from the top: the elite programmes; the advanced, employment-oriented; the theoretical sciences, the open access, arts and humanities sections, and some of the skilled technical/clerical programmes in more complex combinations; followed in most all countries by the kinds of vocational and pre-vocational courses in which the low achievers tend to congregate. While the most privileged students undoubtedly maintain their advantage, it is less obvious that a straightforward "knock-on" effect reigns with no resultant change in social differences. The shift towards more employment-oriented programmes may indeed favour some of the less traditional students, who have always regarded continued studies as requiring a career rationale, than those in more privileged circumstances, freer to pursue the pull of personal interest.

Outstanding questions remain on how new groups of students have been accommodated after expansion, as well as on the continuing fortunes of traditional higher education students and the programmes to which they aspire. It is now common to identify an "identity crisis" throughout third-level education, accompanied by conflicting societal pressures and questions about their purpose. This crisis is felt differently in those institutions and programmes that are avowedly vocational in orientation, as well as those which are more general in nature, faced with manifold pressures to adapt to labour market needs. Potentially conflicting concerns arise between making student representation more equitable within further and higher education (which tend to be educationally privileged), and weighing these equity interesrs against those of the disadvantaged and disaffected, who are excluded from these gates of learning.

Access trends reveal broadly shared developments co-existing with contrasting approaches. Halsey, for instance (1992, p. 9), sees the roots of these common developments to lie in the general delay of selection in education systems, which goes hand-in-hand with the diversification of arrangements and responses. Diversity in turn engenders greater room for choice and the possible reduction of the determinism of early paths and choices, which consequently enhances equality of opportunity. However, this is not the only interpretation; with this schema comes the possibility of even more complex differentiation and inequality.

Similarly, Jallade (1992) singles out diversity in describing patterns of access. His summary confirms the importance of new pecking orders, which he describes in terms of the "strengthening" of hierarchies that accompanies diversification:

> "The importance given to grades in the admission and guidance process is the inevitable corollary of the institutional diversification process described above. Not only is higher education in Western Europe diversifying into sectors and sub-sectors, but differences – and explicit and implicit hierarchies – based on academic prestige are appearing between establishments. Clearly, in systems which are so diverse, there is no room for admission procedures based solely on the possession of the secondary education qualification." (p. iv)

The general concern therefore remains: while there has undoubtedly been a marked general expansion of opportunities, new mechanisms have nevertheless come into play tending to counteract their redistributive effects – the "goal posts" have moved. There is certainly far less evidence of doors opening to the most prestigious programmes, and indeed the distance between higher levels of education and less desired programmes correspondingly expands with increasing participation in higher education.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR DISADVANTAGED YOUTH

It may well be preferable for the mainstream initial education system to seek to minimise levels of disaffection rather than provide programmes for those already disenchanted. Drop-out is widely perceived as an acute problem, and high levels of disadvantage among young men have emerged alongside specific problems for young women. The need for integrated responses is widely acknowledged, as is the importance of high quality programmes that do not themselves further stigmatise the participants.

An OECD study sought to reflect both education and training concerns and those of local initiatives for employment creation (Smith, 1990*a*). Smith describes as "particularly striking" the lack of discussion of mainstream education systems. The conclusion he draws is that the main contribution of this system lies more in the early and fundamental role to improve the relevance and flexibility of all programmes, from the beginning of schooling, than in any particular course for those who have already moved outside mainstream provision, at least with regard to the immediate post-compulsory years. In other words, if disaffection has already set in, the mainstream system is unlikely to prove an attractive option. Improvement may best lie in attempting to minimise the levels of disaffection and in allowing access at later junctures as second-chance opportunities for adults when the most negatives attitudes to school begin to subside.

Smith summarises some of the principal features of projects and programmes for the disadvantaged (though learning from them is complicated due to the sheer number and variety of schemes in OECD countries). In particular, he highlights the difficulties of designing projects and programmes for the disadvantaged who will be least drawn to provision that only repeats the previous schooling that they rejected. Yet if programmes are to be local and geared to community needs, their success is highly dependent either on employer involvement in areas where the economic fabric is itself fragile or else on the individual efforts and innovations of particular project leaders.

> "Many national programmes to combat youth unemployment relied heavily on employer-based training or work experience. While this provided a substantial proportion of places, it tended to reflect local economic conditions. Thus, in the peripheral estates there were few large employers with the resources to provide training on any scale. Employers in such areas were typically small, inexperienced in providing training, and likely to be attracted by the prospect of subsidised labour. Disadvantaged young people were therefore potentially locked into a limited set of opportunities. Where employer-based schemes appeared to work well, these were often co-operative or joint ventures involving groups of employers with sufficient resources to plan a co-ordinated programme. The Compact schemes represent a developed form of such joint working among groups of employers, but also included a formal agreement with the local school system.
>
> Community-based projects provided an alternative form of provision for the unemployed in several areas. Unlike some of the national employer-based schemes, these were often developed by groups in the area to meet a local need. Though there were many differences from area to area, there was a mix of training, limited production and other services for young people. Typically, successful schemes were heavily dependent on a key individual or sometimes a small group. Often there was a strong sense of innovation and opportunity and were actively exploring new possibilities. Indeed, this capacity may be essential for success in a setting where demoralisation and failure are always close at hand. However, all such projects depended on short-term and insecure funding, which directly affected their capacity to attract and hold staff and offer quality training. This uncertainty often stemmed directly from an ambivalence at the heart of the policy for young unemployed. Were such schemes a permanent addition to training and employment programmes, or were they merely a

> temporary addition to act as a holding point at a time of high unemployment?" (Smith, 1990*a*, pp. 46-47)

Several of the national submissions to the OECD also referred to the particular difficulties faced by those who drop out, not only from school but from the various programmes intended to be structured and targeted to the needs of those who seek an alternative to mainstream education. The Netherlands "at risk" statement can be regarded as typical of many:

> "Not all pupils complete their course successfully. It is estimated that about 40 per cent of those who enrol on short secondary vocational courses do not complete their training. For the apprenticeship system this figure is about 20 per cent. Moreover, not all students find employment after completing their training. Their chances are strongly dependent on the sector in which they were trained. For instance, the prospects in the metal sector have been quite good in recent years, but for the textile industry they are poor. In the latter sector, many ethnic minority girls are enrolled." (OECD/AR, Netherlands, pp. 33-34)

Denmark is another country particularly concerned by the drop-out problem:

> "7 per cent of all young people do not commence on a course of education when they have left the Folkeskole (the municipal primary and lower secondary school). 22 per cent do not complete a post-compulsory course of education (*i.e.* course preparing for further studies or vocationally qualifying course of education). 30 per cent of all young people do not complete a vocationally qualifying course of education. 10 per cent of a year group commence on a post-compulsory course of education but drop out before completion. The main dropout affects the vocational education and training programmes. The dropout is highest at the beginning of the school period (0-0 months) and most pronounced at technical schools." (OECD/EAP, Denmark).

Boys are over-represented among those who drop out early even before the end of secondary schooling. The New Zealand submission states explicitly that: "In the 1980s girls have been far less likely than boys to leave school early, and have on average left school with higher qualifications" (OECD/EAP, New Zealand, p. 20). It underlines both that young men appear in greater numbers among the disadvantaged, and that female disadvantages are those of a minority within a minority. Especially in times of worsening labour market prospects, attention also needs to be given to the alternative route into adult status that some young women choose – early pregnancy and parenthood are preferred to continued education and training. While this may remove them from the immediate responsibility of the education, training and labour market authorities, the need for training may be just as acute for young mothers who will ultimately be seeking a return to the job market. They will then suffer the additional handicap of a period of absence on top of their already low initial levels of training and qualifications unless there is continued access to training.

Several countries emphasize the importance they attach to integrated responses and comprehensive policy frameworks through which to tackle the general problems of the young "at risk", for whom the mainstream offerings of the educational system have often proved unattractive. In Denmark, a national committee was established under the heading of "Education and Training for All". Its action plan includes a campaign to reduce drop-out rates and to ensure a "better introduction" to a post-compulsory course of their choice so as to minimise the risk of falling away from organised provision. But, it also includes the complementary concern about course quality to weak pupils, and the room to introduce non-traditional offers that might more successfully meet their needs. (OECD/EAP, Denmark, *op. cit.*) By 1996, this action plan appeared to attain its intended impact: the drop-out rate from technical schools was 10 per cent, down from 20 per cent in 1992.

The Netherlands "at risk" statement describes programmes for drop-outs involving the Ministry of Education, as well as those of the Ministries of Welfare and Health, Social Affairs and Employment, and Justice, whose programmes can be divided into those seeking to reduce truancy, those aiming to bring truants and other drop-outs back into the mainstream education system, and those offering supplementary training outside the regular school system. There is a national co-ordinating committee for school absenteeism. Yet despite these efforts, and their "moderate success", the most disadvantaged groups are still unreachable and are therefore marginal even to this provision. In the Netherlands, these include Turkish and Moroccan pupils who are seriously under-represented throughout post-compulsory education: "In 1986 only 72 Moroccan and 230 Turkish students were to be found in higher vocational education, and only 139 Turkish and 50 Moroccan students were enrolled in university courses. The number of Turkish and Moroccan youth in the 20-30 age range was respectively 40 000 and 20 000" (OECD/EAP, Netherlands).

Other countries mention other specific population groups where disadvantages are most concentrated. The lists of the most vulnerable groups are not surprising, yet they reflect the different social fabrics of each country. The priority groups in New Zealand, for instance, include: "Maori, Pacific Islanders, those with low skills and qualifications and the long-term unemployed" who "form the groups most seriously disadvantaged in the labour market, both now and in the foreseeable future". The "under-represented" in Germany include "school-leavers from special schools, secondary general school-leavers without qualifications, foreigners and young women". The concentration of educational disadvantages in Spain is the same as in most other national settings but their list of priorities casts a wide net to include: "the school population in rural areas where preventing non-schooling is a major task; the sector already attending school but with social and academic problems; young people aged between 14 and 16 not attending school, whose socio-labour integration must at least be helped; the temporary and circus employed itinerant population, whose continuous coming and going is an obstacle to satisfactory school progress; the ethnic minorities, particularly the Gypsy population; the immigrant communities, not yet sufficiently integrated in society and in the educational system; and the prison population, whose special life-style is in itself the first obstacle to their educational participation" (OECD/EAP, New Zealand, Germany, Spain).

Even if countries achieved sudden success in attracting these populations to participate more readily in programmes targeted at the disadvantaged, the major obstacles of stigma and status remain. Simply participating in targeted programmes often brings its own forms of exclusion, no matter what the design and contents of the programme in question. Insofar as young people themselves recognise the stigma, they will not, with some justification, be convinced that participation is worth it. As far as the formal school and education system is concerned, these forms of exclusion reinforce the conclusion that their main response is more to make mainstream learning as relevant and appealing as possible to students in their charge from an early age than to tempt the disenchanted back into the classroom.

QUESTIONS OF POLICY DESIGN AND PLANNING

The questions of quality and effectiveness are again crucial. They are the aspects that education and training policy can most control, in contrast to such other elements as employer recognition or the attitudes of disadvantaged youngsters themselves. If beliefs are justified that such programmes are of poor quality, it will not be surprising if they have little success. And once issues of quality are raised, the more fundamental question also arises: "Good in what terms?".

There is the general matter of programme quality: aims, organisation, contents, staff, links with the community and with employers – how satisfactory are these and how dependent are they a certain security in the form of a guaranteed future? Is there any conflict of purpose for programmes between the general labour market aim to improve the employability of youngsters and the more targeted equity concern to reach those with the worst problems? There is, in other words, the issue of whether or not prioritising employability leads to concentrating on those who have already demonstrated potential and a willingness to learn, at the expense of the more marginal. And even if the aim of building bridges to mainstream employment is taken as the over-riding concern, there is the further question of the place for programmes defined by a broader social and cultural ambition rather than by the specifically vocational, in recognition of the lack of job opportunities in many of the localities in question. Though the labour market relevance of supposedly "social" programmes may not be immediately apparent, the programmes might serve a vital economic as well as social function in reducing the risk of marginal youth slipping into total exclusion.

However the balances of learning, social function, and economic relevance are attained, questions arise about whether the available instruments of policy and provision are suitable (involving which agencies with what powers) to address the related serious concerns of lack of housing, drug abuse, crime, and early pregnancy. Or is tackling these general problems asking too much of specific education and training programmes – as opposed to general policy strategies – running the risk of a dilution of effort and, ultimately, of effectiveness? The danger is pessimistically to view education and training programmes as proposing solutions to problems well beyond their responsibility, thereby risking to reduce their focus on matters where they can actually make a difference and inspire disappointment and reduced support when excessively ambitious goals are not attained.

ADULT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Adults are part of the "quiet revolution" of expanded participation. As the required thresholds of knowledge, skills and qualifications continue to rise, the problems of illiteracy are becoming more urgent and concentrated. Equity issues are just as relevant to vocational, including enterprise, training. Familiar inequalities and non-linear effects are evident, but there is a need for better data to establish the actual patterns of participation in such training. However, the correlation between low educational achievement and the risk of unemployment is confirmed.

An important source of "new" students in many countries is adults, a key group in the idea of "lifelong learning" as an integral aspect of the policy issues of equity, access, and participation. Flourishing participation among adults in educational and training opportunities has already been identified as a development that may come to be considered part of the "quiet revolution" in educational expansion, but which remains largely hidden in contrast to the glare of attention on school systems. The Finnish statement refers to a doubling of adult participation. In the Netherlands, the trend is so marked that it is considered self-evident: "*Obviously*, adult learning and training provision was greatly extended during the 1980s" (OECD/EAP, Netherlands, emphasis added). The Dutch statement continues, "a large part of this provision is used by those who already have a relatively high level of education". This observation is typical, because adults are also students who frequently display the same recruitment biases as younger entrants, which is not surprising given the greater difficulty of the more mature to integrate prolonged study into their lives, compared to the school-leaver.

Abrahamsson, in a paper prepared for this OECD project (Abrahamsson, 1993), outlines how broad this development towards adult participation has been in Sweden, a country most noted for extending educational opportunities to older students. But he also notes how the very marked trend towards the "adultification" of Swedish higher education was reversed. He also remarks that this does not amount to the creation of a new educational "underclass" – adding that participating adults usually had higher than average attainments in initial schooling. (Rubenson, 1992, also observes that *relative* chances have not widened in Sweden.) In short, it is necessary to be very attentive to what the evidence shows rather than assume the existence of reinforcing patterns and trends.

> "The Swedish adult education model as it developed during the 1970s and 1980s has to be seen within the framework of general welfare policies. It has acquired a significant international reputation due to its strong focus on access and equity. A broad provision of second chance learning options has been one of the major characteristics of Swedish adult education. Adult learning for work and active citizenship have in many respects contributed to the development of modern Sweden.
>
> Today, young students have recaptured their traditional majority position in higher education in Sweden, a development that can be explained by the changed admission requirements in combination with a major expansion of the number of student places. Thus, adults above 20 years of age are keeping about the same absolute number of new entrants as in the early 1980s, but have lost in relative position in comparison with young students. As a result, Swedish higher education still has an older student population than most other OECD countries.
>
> Access and participation rates in adult education are directly related to the level of prior education. The risk of a development of a new educational underclass is, however, not supported by some of the current longitudinal studies. Employees with short education have – relatively seen – not lost in position and resources during the early 1970s to the late 1980s." (Abrahamsson, *op. cit.*, pp. 6 and 7)

Important as the issues of adult access to higher education are in the realisation of greater equity, it is also necessary to focus on the experiences of those adults whose initial attainments are low and who do not aspire to the more advanced branches of education. In other words, the relevant equity issues are not restricted only to "an access to advantage" perspective.

The Spanish submission refers to basic adult education (EBA) aimed precisely at those whose initial educational attainment is deficient, that is, who do not possess the *Graduado Escolar*. The patterns of participation show that certain inequalities are not overcome, despite the remedial and second-chance nature of the provision. For example, while there are no differences "in absolute terms in EBA participation with respect to gender, there is a substantial predominance of young students in EBA (...). As regards the number of illiterates or people without schooling, older students are at a very clear disadvantage with respect to younger ones" (OECD/EAP, Spain). A number of countries have been alert to the distinction between the traditional indicators of illiteracy and the more practical orientation of the concept of "functional illiteracy". Canada is such a country, which has implemented major nation-wide drives to combat illiteracy (see OECD, 1995c). It found that about half of those labelled as functional illiterates had completed nine years of schooling and could have been considered literate on some of the more traditional measures. Two distinctions are in play here: that between attainment (defined as grade level reached) and actual achievements; and the discord between criteria in the education system and criteria for the successful functioning in the economy and society. They are neither necessarily the same nor fixed – the thresholds of achievement and functioning continue to rise in OECD countries.

In contrast to the lack of a gender pattern in EBA in Spain, the New Zealand experience suggests that the "great majority" of enrolments in non-formal continuing education is made up of women, though among the literacy schemes catering to low-income adults and the unemployed, two-thirds of the participants are male (OECD/EAP, New Zealand). Once again, the distribution of disadvantage is not linear but instead complex: men and women both suffer disadvantages. Adult education seems to play an important role in the changing position of women in society and the economy in certain countries, as the New Zealand example indicates. This is the conclusion reached by Rubenson (1992) in his review of participation in Sweden:

> "Regardless of expectations, it should also be noted that the greater opportunity for adults to study has been of significance for women in their struggle for equality. As a consequence, there has been considerable over-representation of women in municipal adult education and also in study circles. During the periods in question there have also been favourable developments for women in trade-union and employer-sponsored education." (p. 20)

On the other hand, some would maintain that greater levels of involvement in municipal adult education is not tantamount to equality of access to the most prestigious branches of learning.

TRAINING

Rubenson's analysis continues with particular attention to the crucial area of enterprise training. He notes that the main increase in adult participation in learning "is due to the explosive development of in-service training". The evidence of another Scandinavian country confirms the importance of the growth of employment-related adult learning in the overall "explosion" of participation. The Finnish statement reports not only the shift towards the vocational but also the greater overlapping of boundaries between the vocational and non-vocational:

> "It is indicative of the change in the content of adult education that in 1972 one third of the participants studied vocational and the rest general subjects, whereas in 1980 half of adult studies related to the vocation or working life and half to free-time pursuits or voluntary activities. The corresponding figures in 1990 were 70 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively. But general adult education has also increased in absolute terms. Out of the 3.7 million people between 18 and 73, 1.1 received vocational adult education in 1990. The line of demarcation between general and vocational education had lowered both for the provider and the participant. Professional and vocation skills are now seen to include more elements which were previously considered as general knowledge, and education provided by educational civic organisations is more and more conceived as relating to the world of work." (OECD/EAP, Finland)

This trend towards greater adult participation in training may be problematic for the realisation of equity. Despite the fact that vocationally-oriented adult training is critical in times of rapid change, and especially for the less advantaged sections of the population, it might also be one of the most markedly unequal in terms of social intake and representation [*e.g.* Rubenson, who observes that the social economic differences are by far the largest in this form of adult education (*op. cit.*, pp. 19-20)]. However, in some countries, the middle class bias in liberal arts adult education may be just as evident. From the OECD review quoted below, it is not clear that in all countries the distribution of opportunities for in-company training is always the most unequal, even if the patterns largely conform to those which might be expected based on the other evidence considered in this report – especially the biases of access and participation towards the already-educated.

Issues of equity, access, and participation are, in fact, just as relevant in relation to enterprise training, even though in many countries this large, diverse sector of learning and provision has received far less scrutiny in equity terms than formal schooling and higher education systems. Whereas in the analysis of school and higher education (*i.e.* the formal system) equity issues enjoy a long history and extensive literature, in the fields of vocational education and training for younger and older adults they are much less understood. It is an area fraught with data problems of statistical information and comparability so that no comprehensive picture can be ascertained, and certainly not for the majority of OECD countries. But some material is available which was summarised in the 1991 *OECD Employment Outlook*. The survey confirms that those with higher levels of initial education and sections of the population which traditionally fare better in access to learning opportunities are again prominent among those who receive training. However, not all patterns are this predictable.

"There are several patterns. First, generally the labour force survey data show little difference between women and men. The enterprise-based data, on the other hand, suggest that women are less likely to receive training (Norway, where the difference is clearly small, is an exception).

Second, in Australia (overall training incidence), France, Germany, Spain and Great Britain young people are much more likely to receive training and the incidence declines steadily with age. The pattern is somewhat different for Finland, Sweden, the United States, Australia (in-house courses), the sample of workers in the Japanese enterprise survey and, to some extent, Norway. The relationship of training and age is more curvilinear, with the maximum point generally in the age range of 30-44. The main difference in these latter countries concerns youth and older workers: with the exception of the United States and Finland, the lowest measured incidence occurs among youth and older workers.

Consistent with the evidence from many other sources, workers with higher 'levels' of educational attainment are generally more likely to receive additional training, although there are minor exceptions (Australia and Japan for the two middle groups of attainment as classified here, and Spain for the two higher levels of attainment, a result which is due to workers who had completed some post-secondary education citing university as their source of training). The importance of apprentices, by definition counted as receiving training, is quite clear in Germany and France where those classified as Group C (vocationally-oriented training) are more likely to receive training compared with other groups. In both Australia and the United States, workers who have completed at least one university degree are more likely to receive training in all of the major categories of enterprise training statistics gathered in each survey compared with other educational groups.

These findings are of some importance for the issue of training access. Education and post-school training seem to be complements. One implication is that, on average, less formal schooling probably leads to more limited training opportunities and possibilities for augmenting human capital (...). Given the considerable evidence that less formal education is associated with a greater likelihood of experiencing unemployment, and the more limited research suggesting that receipt of training also somewhat reduces unemployment probabilities, this complementarity may even further aggravate the problems faced by the disadvantaged." (Tan, 1989; Laulhe, 1990).

(...) [Concerning occupations] there are several common patterns, but also several dissimilarities." (OECD, 1991*a*, pp. 145-146, 148-152)

It is perhaps as important to draw attention to the unexpected aspects of this OECD review of participation patterns in training as it is to note the predominant pattern of inequalities reinforcing existing advantages and disadvantages. Throughout OECD countries, the incidence of training is not related uniformly to either age or skill. For occupational skill levels, for instance, some skilled manuals receive more training than other non-manuals, though professionals and those in management positions are universally advantaged. Understanding these relationships calls for better data and close analysis, sensitive to occupational, industrial sector, and skill level distinctions. It calls for attention to work settings that are "training-rich" and others that are impoverished environments with few prospects for updating and professional development.

The degree to which the participation of adults in education and training mirrors existing inequalities is much more significant than a simple correlation. The more that additional training and updating become the source of occupational skill and security in the face of rapid change, the more they become a critical component of overall life-chances. Longitudinal research from Sweden, for instance, suggests that as the effects of initial educational patterns on occupational status diminish after thirty years of age, the complementary effects of adult education on such status increase with age (Tuijnman, 1989). The circles can therefore be vicious. Not only does access to initial education and training shape subsequent life-chances, since its influence is felt most immediately after labour market entry, further education and training (participation in which is closely related to the initial patterns) tend to grow in importance as the former becomes less influential. (It would be useful to know if the same findings are repeated in a country where adult participation in organised learning is less the norm than in Sweden, and indeed whether the emergence of similar patterns could be expected in others, as the expansion of adult education and training reaches levels that historically were only observed in Scandinavian countries.)

The importance of qualifications in lowering the risks of unemployment is certainly confirmed by the national submissions to the OECD project. In Germany, the relationship is marked: "the qualification structure of the unemployed differs greatly from that of the employed; at 47 per cent, the proportion of persons who had not completed any vocational training was more than twice as high." Their report also suggests that qualifications determine women's labour market chances: "(...) it is also true for women that the lack of a certificate attesting to vocational qualification entails a particularly high job market risk" (OECD/EAP, Germany). This pattern supports the notion of an asymmetry in the relationship between qualifications and job outcomes for men and women. While lack of qualifications are especially telling for women, as is the case in Germany, possession of qualifications is less a guarantee of female progress than it is for men. Though women have made major strides in educational attainment, this is certainly not matched by work equality or even in access to enterprise training.

It is nevertheless important to avoid generalising linear patterns when realities are more complex. With regard to the gender issue, the New Zealand figures, which generally confirm the universal patterns, have nuances as well: "As might be expected, within each group of working age unemployed, a decreasing proportion of the group holds each higher level qualification. The exception lies with males who hold post-secondary qualifications. This may reflect the impact of the economic downturn on those industries which previously employed apprentices and trade technicians." (The New Zealand statistics also point to the particularly vulnerable situation of the long-term unemployed; "a very clear picture emerges (...) of a higher proportion of the long-term than the short-term unemployed holding no qualifications") (OECD/EAP, New Zealand). (For a full discussion of the educational attainment levels of the unemployed, see OECD, 1989*a*, Chapter 2.) Spanish data also confirm the general pattern but, with its comparatively high unemployment levels (especially among young people), the country report pinpoints that the correlation is only really clearly discernible among older age groups – aged 30 and over – and especially for the over 40 age group (OECD/EAP, Spain). Even if there is no immediate labour market advantage discernible for those who stay on for additional education, training, or qualifications, this does not mean that such an advantage will not emerge later.

Some of the principal questions for policy and adult access to and participation-also in education and training concern 1) the extent to which improving access to education and training for older adults constitutes a policy priority and 2) the representation among those older students and trainees of the traditionally "low access" groups. Fundamental questions of organisation arise. Are adult opportunities systematic enough to constitute a *system* so that weak groups do not miss out and all know the opportunities for which they are applicable? How is it possible to balance the advantages of building such a system with the risk that it could become just a massive reinforcer of the inequity and inequality of the initial systems of education and training, leaving the already marginalised totally excluded? What are the implications of the persistent findings that adults who benefit most from education and training tend to be those who have substantially benefited already, and particularly for training and professional updating which are most closely defined by the needs of the employment world? The proper role of policy must be clearly delineated in order to address the reality that those with jobs, and especially in training-rich environments, have the greatest access to further opportunities. Policy must also identify the particular mechanisms that are most effective in reaching adults in need of further learning – the scale and nature of provision, information, incentives for participation, facilitating factors (including finance) – and how these mechanisms can meet certain target populations (women returners, older employees at risk of redundancy, the retired, displaced workers and the long-term unemployed, migrants, adult illiterates, and the disabled). These are some of the areas where current understanding is weak in all countries, and especially in those where lifelong learning is still poorly developed.

Part Three

THE MAIN POLICY ORIENTATIONS

MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

EQUITY ISSUES AT THE TOP OF THE POLICY AGENDA

The titles of the most recent meetings held by OECD Ministers of Education – "High Quality Education and Training for All" in November 1990, and "Making Lifelong Learning a Reality for All" in January 1996 – reflect the centrality of equity issues on today's policy agenda. The Ministers recognised that addressing equity and quality is indispensable, and that the learning opportunities in question must broadly embrace both education and training rather than narrowly segmenting them. In the face of very rapid economic change and the obsolescence of knowledge and skills, societies risk serious polarisation if they do not create widespread opportunities for initial *and* continued access to learning. Healthy democracies depend on informed and knowledgeable citizenship. In short, these reasons demonstrate why OECD countries should strive to ensure that high quality opportunities for education and training should be available *for all*.

In their November 1990 Paris meeting, the Ministers agreed to a set of ambitious "policy orientations" to shape developments to the end of the decade and beyond. Some concerned detailed matters of implementation: information, data, evaluation and research in education, as well as matters of finance. But the main "orientations" they identified set the principal aims and parameters of policy, among which equity issues are paramount. This is clear in some of the main headings under which these orientations were presented:

- a high quality start to lifelong learning – the crucial role of initial education and training;
- quality and access in a lifelong perspective;
- education "for all" implies priority for the educationally under-served; and
- overcoming illiteracy.

This report has been prepared not as a detailed description of existing policies and practices in relevant fields but as a review of general developments in OECD countries that give additional substance to these broad aims and orientations. The natural starting points for this review are the economic and social developments that provide the essential background to the realisation of equity in education today.

THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT: CHANGE, OPPORTUNITIES, PROBLEMS

Due to the uneven performance of economies in many OECD countries during the 1990s, it is easy to overlook the dominant trend of growth and general economic affluence. Employment has in general risen, even alongside high levels of unemployment, especially in regions outside Europe. Many people in OECD countries enjoy comfortable lifestyles, including large numbers of those who in earlier times would have been especially insecure – the elderly are a prime example. Stressing these social and economic aspects context may seem an inappropriate background to this report, which is particularly concerned with individuals who benefit least from general social progress. In fact, it is in light of this activity and prosperity that certain of the most pertinent trends take on their meaning.

Prominent among these trends is the speed of structural change. The industrial and sectoral composition of OECD economies continues to be transformed, job change and occupational obsolescence become rapid and commonplace. In a number of countries, employment growth has been concentrated in service jobs, often regarded as primarily female, and part-time. Older workers threatened with or experiencing redundancy are obvious victims of the restructuring, while young people struggle hard to become established in today's competitive labour markets and many remain marginal. Widespread and rapid restructuring has its own implications for lifelong learning, but it also has far-reaching impact on the nature of societies. In particular, it means that insecurity is a generalised phenomenon even among those whose qualifications and attainments are relatively high. In this context, those whose foundation in education and training is weak are faced with profound uncertainties.

There are many indicators of marginalisation and exclusion within otherwise rich societies. A most clear-cut sign is the high levels of unemployment which have become such a feature of many OECD countries that it has become commonplace now to characterise economic growth as "jobless". That a high and rising proportion are long-term unemployed is particularly worrying, because combined with developments towards employment precariousness, it reinforces the concern about social polarisation. Recent cross-national analyses of income and earnings trends show that inequalities widened in many OECD countries in the 1980s. Serious poverty exists amidst affluence, and the distribution of poverty has changed so that new groups are particularly "at risk", especially certain groups of women and children. Even in adopting a time perspective extending further back than the past decade, international analysis provides little support for any optimistic predictions of a dominant trend towards greater openness.

Some of the worst problems of marginalisation and exclusion in OECD countries are experienced by their ethnic and minority populations. These become still more glaring when socio-economic disadvantage is compounded with racism and discrimination. The promotion of political and cultural participation in society through the genuine recognition of different languages and cultures has a crucial role to play here as well as that of tackling socio-economic disadvantage. Rapidly changing international migrations bring their own tensions and educational challenges.

In short, general prosperity in OECD countries co-exists with and even exacerbates these compound socio-economic disadvantages. It can obscure the plight of those excluded from a share in that affluence, thereby adding to the wide social and economic distance between the privileged and the under-privileged. While high initial levels of educational attainment are certainly an advantage in this scenario, they constitute no guarantee of security and are subject to the rapid depreciation of value that comes with the obsolescence of knowledge and skills. Lifelong learning is therefore of primary importance. Particular emphasis needs to be given to opportunities that permit re-learning and retraining among those of all ages. The promotion of equity should be understood in terms of recurrent access to education and training opportunities, and participation in them as genuine learning, not mere attendance or certification. And though few would turn to education as a solution to poverty, there is more positive recent acceptance of the potency of educational experiences to respond, along with other social and economic policies, to the handicapping effects of early deprivation. Education should not be considered exclusively in terms of meeting other ends (better employment prospects, income chances, greater security), but as promoting social and cultural participation, and thereby contributing to the reduction of marginality and exclusion.

EDUCATIONAL EXPANSION AND EQUALITY

Expansion continues to dominate educational developments in OECD countries. It is apparent most obviously in the rapidly rising retention rates in post-compulsory education and training in many countries, but it is not confined to this for it has also been experienced in the different settings of pre-school, higher and adult education, and labour market training. Such is the ubiquity of expansion that it is rarely recognised as the major trend that it is. This is partly due to the disappointment over optimistic predictions that were common in the 1950s and 1960s, assuming an automatic connection between a greater volume of learning opportunities and greater social equality and justice. However, it is also too simple to dismiss the importance of the massive educational investments made in OECD countries in modern times as if absolute gains are nullified by lack of change in relative chances. Those absolute gains are important. However, education, training and learning are now so central to individuals and societies alike that the genuine availability of learning to all has become a condition of social justice. There is some indication that opportunities have widened, but many of the most familiar inequalities continue to persist.

Just as the previous section confirmed how general affluence co-exists with serious socio-economic deprivation and difficulty, so serious problems remain despite the extension of educational opportunities through expansion. Long-term analyses of social influences on educational attainment, for instance, mirror parallel studies of social mobility that disappoint liberal expectations of growing openness. In only two of the thirteen countries, in a major study permitting these international cross-time comparisons, has there been a clear trend towards the loosening of the bonds between social background and educational career. There has however been a significant reduction in gender differences in all countries analysed.

How much progress has been made depends partly on the criteria adopted to judge that progress. One set of criteria belongs to what can be termed an "access to educational advantage" perspective: progress towards greater equality is assessed in terms of patterns of recruitment to "advantageous" branches of learning systems, such as higher education. A more pointed, demanding and perhaps revealing indicator is access to the prestige programmes within higher education. In some countries, there is little sign of improvement in relative class chances of access to advantage; in others, the modest pattern is towards widened opportunities. Male-female differences have universally narrowed more than those between socio-economic groups. Prestige programmes have opened their doors far less than courses that cater to non-traditional students. This matter extends well beyond educational practice and administration, since it is a universal social dynamic that the privileged strata of society strive hard to maintain their privilege through education.

Even within this "access to advantage" approach, it is necessary to ensure that the breath of focus includes aspects of equality with a full range of educational outcomes. *Successful course completion* is as important as the issue of patterns of access to those courses. In some countries, the drop-out phenomenon is very significant, both in numerical and social terms. Even after these issues of completion are addressed, there still remains the even more difficult problem of the *social translation* of qualifications and attainments into comparable prospects for all social groups. This of course depends on much more than reforms in the education and training worlds.

Moving from access to advantage to the contrasting situation of those who are and remain disadvantaged allows the social polarisation developments to gain their full force. Important as the "access to advantage" approach is, it lies within meritocratic parameters which accept the existence of inequality and which arguably address only very little the situation of so-called underachievers.

Some social arguments or "theories" even warn against expecting any benefit for disadvantaged sections of the population from educational expansion. Certain of these counter-arguments were summarised in this report. There is the *zero-sum/positional good* counter-argument – this posits that education functions primarily as an allocative mechanism to a largely fixed set of social goods, giving little grounds for optimism vis-à-vis equalisation, since high qualifications seek the same volume of benefits. There is the *changing goal posts* counter-argument: this warns against expecting relationships, gains and benefits to remain static as education and training systems expand, because demands are continually reset, often leaving the low achiever in a stagnant position. And there is the *dumping ground counter-argument* which maintains that there is no intrinsic merit in the lowest status programmes designed for many of these pupils and students; their purpose is primarily to provide the guise rather than the reality of useful learning. In the view of this counter-argument, non-participation is perhaps less detrimental to the student/trainee's prospects than participation in programmes which are widely recognised as dead-end.

Each of these counter-arguments carries force and applies, to a greater or lesser degree, in all OECD countries. But they are altogether too pessimistic if interpreted as stating that no change, no matter how well intentioned, can ever improve the prospects of the least advantaged, which would only lead to the abandon of equity and the toleration of the most glaring inequalities. So much depends on the degree to which education and training systems, all of which are hierarchical in some measure, can genuinely target the disadvantaged. Today, there is a more widely accepted belief in the potential of well-designed targeted and compensatory measures to achieve lasting effects. This applies even more when they take the form, not of additional "special" programmes, but of revisions to mainstream practice in ways which shift the balance towards the less advantaged. Evidence from the United States in the 1970s and 1980s shows that it is possible for the absolute achievement levels of such students to be improved and their relative distance from the better-off to be narrowed. However, the evidence also demonstrates how vulnerable the gains can be in the face of adverse social and economic conditions, such as rising poverty and widening inequalities of income and welfare. In fact, some of those earlier learning gains have subsequently been lost since the end of the 1980s. Educational reform represents a promising and constructive route for improving the prospects of many of the least advantaged but it cannot oppose the society and economy in which it operates.

BROAD IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY: EMERGING PRINCIPLES AND ORIENTATIONS

High quality education and training for some and mediocre provision for large numbers of the rest adds up to a poor quality system. Effective schooling is especially important for disadvantaged pupils/students, because of the weaker foundation for learning represented in their home and community backgrounds and *because they are likely to be concentrated geographically in areas with the greatest educational problems. Effectiveness is characterised by acquiring motivation to learn and re-learn by all students, especially by the traditionally low achievers.*

For educational, economic and democratic reasons, the achievements of the most academic sections of education systems provide only the most partial indicator of the quality of those systems overall. Much more revealing of the true quality of the system are the achievements, standing and ethos of the sections of the system catering to the least academic. This does not contradict the realisation of excellence but is an extension of it – a good education system should strive to excel in all its parts.

Educational disadvantage is neither a single nor simple phenomenon nor does it have one main cause; it is the result of complex interactions of home, socio-economic and community, and educational factors.

Given the broad meaning of the notion "educational disadvantage", and the interactive way in which all the home, community, and educational factors interplay to influence outcomes, there is no single or simple means available to identify and reach the disadvantaged. There is a spatial element at work, in terms of the geographic distribution of all these factors, but selecting areas proves to be an inefficient way of reaching the individually disadvantaged, despite the concentrations of "at risk" children in inner cities or rural poverty areas. Studies have also shown a significant degree of mobility in and out of different disadvantaged categories. Much depends on the type of programme envisaged and the likely target population. Some policies can only realistically operate at an area or school level, while others can be directed at individuals.

It follows from the multi-faceted, interactive nature of disadvantage that the policy thrust should be to consolidate and integrate rather than fragment policies and practices. Hence, while local action and change is critical, its effect will be much reduced if it leads to fragmentation and the marginalisation of parts of the system lying outside mainstream provision. Local action must contribute to systemic reform, rather than represent isolated or "add-on" measures that are both costly and do little to touch the contents and values of mainstream provision. The complex nature of educational disadvantage has implications, therefore, for both the nature and locus of policies to overcome them.

The challenge confronting policies designed to improve the effectiveness of schooling no longer depends primarily on the identification of good practice in individual schools and classrooms, it depends more on generalising such practice especially to places where effectiveness is least in evidence.

Meeting this challenge shows just how intertwined the aims relating to equity and quality are. Targeted, redistributive policies are needed that are integral to the mainstream system in order to redress the balances of resources, attractiveness and professionalism at the school and system level so that all schools can offer a broad equality of high quality schooling. Such a drive to redistribution will likely require radical changes from existing practices in most countries, especially in those areas where educational, social, and economic problems are most concentrated. It may also run counter to market-oriented school policies that widen rather than lessen existing disparities.

Probably the most important factor to address is the nature and quality of teachers and teaching. It is therefore necessary to generalise improvements in quality directly through teachers rather than to rely exclusively on indirect changes via organisational or financial reforms. It is consequently essential for the professional conditions and rewards of those who teach in less favoured areas, subjects, and branches to be a prime target for action. This applies to training as much as to initial schooling.

Teachers are at the core of things – it is on them that reform depends. The professionals cannot be regarded as marginal to any reform endeavour, still less as a "problem" to be avoided through other reform measures, but as integral to it. It is within the realm of policy to initiate the change of the poor standing and quality of education and teachers, and to assure that the recruits most needed to turn the situation around will not be discouraged. Positive results will only be produced and reinforced through high level professional recruitment. The equity dimension is also crucial. A key issue is the composition of the teaching force, including the representation of members of different ethnic and community groups, an area where few countries can boast outstanding success. There is also the need to reverse the dominant correlation between high standing and rewards for those staff who are found in the most prestigious branches and sections of systems. The situation of vocational education teachers and trainers is especially important in this regard.

The key role of teachers and trainers in all educational and training settings means that issues of professional competence, up-dating, recruitment and profile are as important in the field of recurrent education and training as in other parts of the system. This does not stand in opposition to the full development of opportunities for open and distance learning but is its necessary complement. The impact of all these factors on the non-traditional adult learner warrants especially close attention.

Since it is important to assure the full exercise of professional autonomy and community involvement, a major role for central policy is less direct intervention and more the creation of genuinely equal opportunities, especially in rectifying status inequalities in the different branches and institutional settings of education and training.

It is contradictory for education and training systems to tolerate wide disparities in status and quality across their branches and sectors, and at the same time to

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be concerned about unequal patterns of recruitment. If diversity of learning opportunities is considered necessary and valuable, then the main role for policy intervention in terms of equalisation lies in removing those disparities so that access and recruitment to each becomes much less of an equity issue. This is illustrated clearly in the divisions that exist between academic/general and vocational programmes, which are too often considered only "second class" in the eyes of trainees, parents and the community, as well as system leaders and policy-makers.

Vocational tracks are too often the "problem" programmes for those regarded as ill-suited for the mainstream college-bound track. This serves neither the pupils and students, nor the programmes in question. It has effects well beyond these students, trainees, and programmes. It associates educational success with delaying choices for adult life and with courses where labour market considerations are of tangential concern. This enforces the system-wide value that labour market aims are a low priority; it also promotes the perverse view that equity requires all to enjoy a protracted period of entry to post-educational life. Neither equity nor efficiency are well-served by these systemic assumptions. They sit uneasily with the priority widely accorded in OECD countries to establish systems of lifelong learning.

Realising lifelong learning calls for radical visions and significant change affecting both initial and continuing systems of education and training. A profound review may well be needed of a predominantly quantitative interpretation of the route to reform – which results in the continual extension of initial education and training, absorbing large volumes of crucial resources and spreading what is left more thinly. The way forward may be a shorter, better resourced, very high quality initial system, which accords the highest priority to equality of opportunity, with more extensive recurrent, continuing learning opportunities closely related to the economic goals of education.

It is essential to build up systematic opportunities for the continued return to learning through education and training throughout a lifetime. This presupposes a break in the rigid separation of the early years centred on learning and preparation for adult life and later adult life itself, centred around work, retirement and family building. The finality of early educational success, influenced as it is by social and home background, must continue to give way to more flexible, open-ended arrangements. Recurrent learning will involve both training and retraining for job purposes and programmes oriented to cultural and leisure pursuits, though it is unlikely that they will be treated identically with regard to organisation and financing. The widespread opportunity to return to education and training underpins the success of reforms in the initial system.

This interpretation of lifelong learning sees no inherent contradiction in promoting a strong initial system alongside widespread recurrent learning opportunities later in life. The one feeds and depends on the other. This also means that the organisation and financing of the two should not be separated but considered together in the major investment decisions for learning strategies. This in turn may result in radical departures from current trends. In particular, the aims of quality, efficiency and equity might suggest a different way to start learning – more equal for pupils, schools, and areas; more intensive and better-resourced; and shorter in duration – all oriented towards providing the basis for later life and learning. The recurrent, continuing education system might then be especially oriented towards vocational ends – understood broadly – in higher, tertiary or adult education. It is important to recognise that an equitable system providing lifelong learning for all will likely demand heavy resources, and should therefore actively generate those resources through its contribution to activity and prosperity.

If OECD countries are to move towards becoming the "learning societies" of the 21st century, it will not suffice to regard equity issues as primarily affecting schools and initial systems, with later adult and continuing opportunities as more naturally subject to the dictates of individual demand and learning markets. Employment-related education and training is especially problematic for those whose job situations are weakest and especially important for them if their life prospects are to be improved.

Much of the debate on equity and equality of opportunity has focused on the initial systems of education and training within the formal sector. Equity issues are no less relevant to continuing education and training, especially since up-dating, career changing, and labour market entry and re-entry are important for all, within the overall framework of lifelong learning. Who has access to what opportunities is just as relevant for adult students and trainees as they are for young people.

Flexibility is a key consideration, as is fashioning continuing training opportunities that genuinely contribute to employment needs. But, it is also necessary to formulate explicit routes and pathways for post-school training and retraining. These routes must be accessible and comprehensible for all so that long-term views can be taken without penalisation for postponing the return to learning, all in a framework where rights and possibilities of access are known from the outset. Issues of access, participation, and financing are critical. It is important to address and overcome the lockstep whereby "skills-rich" work settings are those which are "education and training-rich", and vice versa.

If that lockstep is broken, so that advanced education and training becomes generalised throughout the adult population, it would not only be a major advance towards social equity and participation, but would also pay ample economic dividends.

> *"The continued existence of illiteracy is unacceptable. This applies to illiteracy in the traditional sense and in the new forms generated by scientific and technological change."* (OECD Ministers of Education)

As the demands of complex societies and economies continue to rise, so do the criteria of successful functioning. In this context, the notions "basic" and "minimum" can be misleading, simply because the knowledge and skills in question are themselves changing, and because defining a minimum level is so often synonymous with fixing acceptable standards. The minima of literacy and numeracy do not so much define acceptable educational standards for OECD countries as much as they delineate the problems to eradicate. This, of course, is not writ in stone but must be considered as much in relation to lifelong learning as to the adequacy of initial schooling.

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Technical annex

GLOSSARY

A common typification of educational policy developments in the past quarter of a century is to identify an earlier period in the 1960s and early 1970s when equity, distributive, and redistributive policy goals in education enjoyed a heyday in contrast with more recent years when other policy dictates, such as accountability, quality, and the promotion of education's labour market relevance, have come to the forefront. Such characterisations contain their elements of truth but are usually generalisations and admit too many exceptions significantly to enhance current understanding of present challenges. There are however conceptual and terminological reasons for reviewing simple characterisations and accounts.

There is also the assumption that the terms and relationships in play are clear. If anything, the opposite is true. Terms such as "equity", "equality" (themselves in reference to different terms such as "results" or "opportunities"), "disadvantage", "handicap", "exclusion", "access", "opportunity", "minority", "group" as well as many others. Sometimes such terms are used interchangeably as if language is unimportant next to real-world experiences or problems of the people involved. At other times, the opposite occurs. Debate rages over whether one or another term is correct, as if terminology is more important than the patterns of educational and socio-economic attainment under attention.

There are boundaries and contrasts that, on closer inspection, prove to be far from clear. For example, are the policy aims discussed in this report really so different from, or even in opposition to, the aims of seeking greater efficiency, quality, and labour market relevance? Or is it instead a question of their interpretation, one such interpretation being that any efficient quality education system must offer genuine learning opportunities to *all* pupils and students, especially those whose achievements do not match their potential, rather than leave them aside. By the same token, a vital yardstick of education's success in meeting the needs of the less favoured can be identified precisely in the extent to which it provides a meaningful and lasting preparation for working life.

This section does not provide a comprehensive or definitive summary of concepts. Other terms can undoubtedly be added to those discussed – and, for each term that appears, specific answers and further refinement, as well as disagreement can be found. Completing this annex would be a never-ending task; it is nevertheless essential to embark on the endeavour.

Access: "admittance, way or opportunity, of approach or entrance". The language of access thus relates closely to that of "opportunity". It embraces the dual notions of opening doors – and hence is grounded in the concrete worlds of educational institutions and of facilitating mechanisms such as student finance – and especially in relation to *those who have traditionally been infrequent visitors to education or else excluded altogether*. Access is often discussed in terms of tertiary and higher education, on the grounds that while actual engagement in learning at the compulsory level may be problematic, access itself is assured. (Even accepting this, it can only be said of access in general; access to preferred tracks and programmes, even at the compulsory levels of schooling, may remain very far from assured.) Usage may reflect an "access to advantage" perspective, which enjoys a long-standing tradition in this field. Such a perspective views equity primarily in terms of the possibilities of gaining entry to programmes recognised as among the most desirable, while equality of opportunity depends on equality of rates of enrolment in the privileged streams of different potential student populations. This is a different though by no means contradictory position from another, which focuses instead on improving the standing of the less advantaged programmes, or which concentrates on the mass of average pupils and students who are arguably at neither end of the spectrum of advantage and disadvantage, or else is squarely on the uninterested and disaffected who gain least from the system. In each case, the focus and target for policy action differ.

Like the notion of "equality of opportunity", addressing and improving "access" to education and training admit different degrees of intervention. Promoting access may include the removal of evident barriers to educational participation, or instituting measures actively to encourage greater participation. The nature of the curriculum and the organisation of the programmes on offer are just as relevant. Promoting access can extend well beyond changing the rules of entry to programmes to include the development of new programmes altogether. Adult education, for example, is replete with such instances.

Age: a frequently overlooked dimension, though fundamental in light of the heavy distribution of educational provision towards the young. Not long ago the term "ageism" was frequently met with humour, but has now become eminently serious. The importance of meeting the rapidly changing base and obsolescence of knowledge and skill in economies, issues concerning women returners and older redundant workers, as well as the situation of very large numbers of the retired are just examples to illustrate that access to learning for those of all ages is not a lighthearted matter. The age distribution of learning opportunities is central to those strategies that seek to more evenly balance education and training between "front-end" provision and periodic or recurrent access to education and training at intervals throughout the life-cycle. To advocate such a re-balance does not imply in zero-sum fashion the weakening of the front-end in terms of the quality of one's beginning on the path to learning and re-learning. Indeed, the very success of continuing strategies depends on the universal strength of that start. Conversely, fundamental equity issues are raised by the aim to broaden adult access to opportunities for education and training when the predominant pattern across OECD countries is that these go primarily to the well-off or already-educated.

In addressing the age dimension, a dichotomy is often drawn between children and the young, on one side, and adults, on the other. While this may be a useful distinction for heuristic purposes, it is a very crude age divide with which to grasp many of the relevant issues. The spirit of the broad aim of lifelong learning is not to allow older adults to return only once to education or training instead of continuing longer in their youth, but that they should do so repeatedly. Patterns are not linear, which would imply that either the old or the young are favoured, in direct relation to their years; non-linear patterns of various shapes are typical. The age distribution of enrolments and participation within the adult population is therefore highly relevant.

At-risk: a term which has only recently entered the educator's lexicon, it is one that is often deployed interchangeably with "disadvantaged", implying identical definitions and solutions. Yet the term itself suggests something distinct and connotatively more broad. It suggests the idea that certain individuals are at risk of disadvantage, difficulty, or abuse *whether or not it is actually experienced.* As such, it directs attention at least as much to identification and prevention as it does to remediation. Often in practice, however, such conceptual distinctions are regarded as too fine to be accorded and hence the special value of the concept is diluted. In fact, defining "at-risk" as the same as "disadvantaged" amounts to much the same as defining "disadvantaged" in group terms, irrespective of whether some members of the group have escaped the difficulties. In such cases, these terms are intended to be general and not necessarily precise labels. A further difficulty inherent in literal notions of "risk" is that they are intangible and hence very difficult to measure directly – risk as such is about probabilities, with tangible evidence of the risk occurring only when the feared outcome actually materialises.

Disability: there are obvious definitional questions about who is or is not counted as "disabled". Conflicting considerations come into play: lack of precision in definitional matters lessens the possibilities of targeted and particular policy attention; while precision creates fears of labelling and of separate, perhaps discriminatory, treatment. Such fears can block their reconciliation. There is a multitude of differences in the total array of disabilities, however defined, as there is in the population as a whole, which necessitates a targeted and sensitive identification of educational strategies rather than blanket solutions. The widespread advocacy of *integration* may not always meet this desideratum.

Some might regard the issues of disability as separate from the others discussed in this annex, but that would be a questionable separation. Securing integration assumes that the disabled should not be regarded as apart but as directly implicated by the mainstream policy issues of disadvantage, participation, equity and equality of opportunity. Bringing the disability dimension into the mainstream equity debate serves another major purpose: it clearly demonstrates that the overriding yardsticks and principles for equity, access, and participation (whether for the disabled or for any other section of the population) are not necessarily meritocratic.

Meritocratic rationales are certainly powerful and politically persuasive: that nations, for instance, miss out by failing fully to exploit their "pools of talent" is considered reason to broaden access, or that inequities are manifest when a section of the population has equal talent but unequal opportunities to realise those talents. The reverse implication of such arguments, however, will not meet universal accord, specifically that differences in talent *are* an adequate basis for differentiation as and where they occur. It was this point that lay behind the furious controversies concerning race and IQ, irrespective of what psychological research apparently demonstrated about the group heritability of talent. Many would now assert that the rights of the disabled stand *irrespective* of their levels of scholastic performance compared to their classmates. Such claims are based on a broader appeal to human fulfilment and social participation rights than to the narrower appeal of equal provision for equal "merit".

These considerations sharply raise a query at the heart of the equity issue, by questioning the principles on which fairness should be based. They recast the nature vs. nurture debate. But by the same token, they ask what can be acceptable evidence that particular arrangements for the disabled are equitable or not. They may certainly be unequal: the statistic that per pupil expenditure in special education is five or six times the average per capita spending in formal schools is scarcely *prime facie* evidence that such provision is inequitable, though expenditure is not by any means the entire story. The major question nevertheless remains: By what criteria are fairness and justice to be judged?

Disadvantage: Unlike "inequality", the concept of disadvantage focuses on those situated at the lower end of the dimension where there is more or less equality/inequality, whether this be educational, economic, or social. In practice, the terms are often used loosely, even interchangeably, though they are not at all identical.

"Disadvantage" may be employed in a purely relative sense, so that the disadvantage is defined by reference to those who, in contrast, are advantaged. Arguably, differences may exist without anyone being disadvantaged. For instance, if everyone in a society were to own a television, it is questionable whether the fact that some possess only one set compared with others who are the proud owners of two or three constitutes a genuine disadvantage. Value judgements are at the heart of definitions for disadvantage just as they are for "equity" and "equality of opportunity".

When "disadvantage" carries its common association as referring to those, young or old, with low and insecure forms of support and maintenance, poor health and housing, and little access to the means of improving their life-chances, stressing the value-laden nature of the concept of "disadvantage" becomes merely academic. In these cases, the disadvantage suffered is plain to see. However, the net of meaning can be drawn more widely. Chapter 2, for example, describes how, in the era of mass education and insecure employment, new forms of disadvantage emerge that cover so many in the population that they constitute the majority. The disadvantage here lies in the uncertainty of prospects and the inability of educational qualifications to act as a guaranteed hedge against future problems, in contrast to the assured situation of the privileged, advantaged, few. The greater degree of focus that the notion "disadvantage" provides over "inequality", in terms of concentrating on the lower end of social spectra, is therefore only partial, especially when its coverage can be widely embracing.

A given individual may also be categorised as advantaged or disadvantaged depending on educational, social, and economic dimensions, and "disadvantage" may be defined in either individual or collective terms. Thus, there will be many individuals in each society who are relatively well-off despite belonging to a group or social category which, in general, suffers serious problems. For certain purposes or types of analysis, membership in that category alone may be sufficient for the disadvantage to be accorded, no matter what the actual individual circumstances. Far from being a mere academic distinction of little practical import, these alternatives have very real political application. They lie, for instance, at the heart of the options facing targeted, compensatory policy programmes – whether the basis of disadvantage or the unit for action is considered an individual or a more collective definition.

Disparity sits somewhere between the two: neutral enough to be equated with "difference", robust enough to be synonymous with "inequality", depending on usage. Such flexibility of interpretation inevitably leaves substantial room for imprecision.

Diversity: the moral tone of the concept of "inequality" is essentially negative; the implication is that when found it should be rectified. In contrast, "diversity" has essentially positive connotations despite expressing the existence of differences, even unequals.

In part, such positive connotations stem from the prominence that the notion of **choice** has received in recent years, which in some quarters is closely linked to faith in market-type mechanisms as the most satisfactory way to regulate and distribute social and economic goods. Through this optic, diversity is the precondition for the efficient exercise of choice. Yet this is by no means the only provenance of the positive connotations of "diversity". It is also associated with a liberal individualism that favours diversity in, for instance, curriculum offerings in order to cater to different individual talents, aspirations, and needs. And it is associated in more social terms with **pluralism**, which may take the form of advocating diversity in order to promote the general value of pluralism and pluralistic societies – all of which raises difficulties with more demanding interpretations of equality, especially of outcomes. Or, it may be more specifically in relation to the diversity inherent in, for instance, recognition of minority interests or general support for **multiculturism**, which is founded on the tenet of the *equal recognition of diverse cultural claims.* With regard to the specific interests of the different populations that comprise the pupil and student body, the interpretation of "equality" as referring to "equal recognition for diverse claims" may be especially relevant and politically powerful. In this way, "diversity" and "equality" can be reconciled, though emphasizing at the same time their different possible meanings.

Education as a "good in itself" and education as a means to further social and economic ends: this distinction is fundamental in this field, as rationales for action differ substantially depending on which of the two is deployed. A prime cause of confusion is that arguments tend to switch from one to the other without due recognition of the implications of how different they are.

For the first, the reason for equalising educational chances and making opportunities more equitable is to enable access to culture and knowledge and the enriching experience that education in itself is seen to represent. By discontinuing their studies, individuals are thereby denied personal benefits that they may not recognise or else reject. This raises many difficult questions. Can, for instance, all educational programmes be defended as equally beneficial in the quality of the learning experience they offer? If not, what conclusions are to be drawn concerning those of low "value-added"? Is the assumption to be made that all forms of education and training are good and enriching in themselves, no matter what the evidence may suggest and no matter what students and trainees assert? Many students are sceptical about the value of the experience itself but regard continued studies as a necessary prerequisite to a successful entry to adult life; are their views to be entirely discounted? And how to balance the value of education in the form of organised learning with all the other forms of valuable learning and experience acquired in other settings – is participating in organised education necessarily the best alternative? How then to move beyond the blanket, unempirical "quantitative" stance that must always regard more education as "good" and less as "bad"?

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Some of the difficulties can be avoided by switching the viewpoint to the other side of this equation – education viewed as a means to other ends: income, employment security, social standing, life-chances in general. So long as these relationships are established, there is less urgency to be assured that any particular educational experience is inherently enlightening and of high quality. The "education as means" approach is the dominant perspective in this field of policy and debate. It is founded on an impressive corpus of evidence throughout countries, time, and cultures, which reveals a robust enduring correlation between these different patterns of educational achievements, attainments, and experiences, on the one hand, and those of power, privilege, and socio-economic organisation, on the other.

There is a tendency to switch haphazardly between these two rationales of education as a good in itself and education as a means to these other socio-economic outcomes. For example, we noted the objections of progressives that issues of educational equity have been supplanted in recent years by those promoting education's labour force relevance. Yet if the aim of seeking to redistribute patterns of educational access and participation is adopted precisely in order to redistribute access to labour market benefits, then there is dubious substance to the initial criticism in principle (the objection in detail might be that excessive weight is given in the process to employers' needs, or that "labour market relevance" is being understood too narrowly). In sum, the implications of these two optics are distinct; recognising that distinction can considerably enhance the clarity of aims and debate.

The correlations between educational and socio-economic outcomes are so strong that they have acquired the status of axioms of social enquiry. What is far from axiomatic, indeed what is problematic, is identifying the implications such correlations hold for reform. "Correlation" cannot be considered "causation", as 1970s sociologists concluded when pessimistically stating that "education makes no difference". What they came to recognise is that educational reform is no panacea for the resolution of poverty or insecure and poor employment, or even especially effective in altering the structured inequalities of income and occupation. The pendulum may well have swung back from such pessimism, insofar as there is now a more widespread realistic optimism about the independent impact that education can exercise in improving the achievements of the disadvantaged in individual cases. But this does not amount to a reassertion of the discrete power of educational policy substantially to transform socio-economic structures.

Also problematic is the fact that any such correlation is far from perfect and each admits numerous exceptions to the general tendency. It is therefore important to avoid an overly deterministic view of the mechanisms at play. Great advances on the educational ladder are by no means a guarantee of any particular economic or social rung. The interdependence of the variables means that educational outcomes are as much shaped by the surrounding society and economy as they shape them – which are not one-way relationships.

In fact, progress in understanding the mechanisms at work behind the correlations is far less impressive than mapping the correlations themselves; therefore, reducing accordingly the possibility to identify the most effective policy strategies. This is easy to overlook, which in turn can affect the lessons drawn for policy. Insofar as attention to the correlations between educational and socio-economic patterns sheds little light on the aspects of education that best explain them, the only main conclusion available is the blanket one that "more" education is always the best response for those with "less". Taken to an extreme, this vantage point so neglects the "education as a good in itself" optic that it risks being merely a manifesto for educational survival. More optimistically, to observe the existence of powerful enduring relationships between the patterns and experiences is only the starting point from which to launch a deeper understanding of the actual benefits to individuals resulting from different educational experiences and programmes.

Equality/inequality: at least as commonly employed in its negative form (inequality), this term refers essentially to the condition of being equal, *i.e.* identical in quantity or quality, of the same value, sameness, evenness. It thus has two very particular sides: 1) it concerns the degree of sameness or the identity of different elements; 2) it refers to something else to which "equality" can be judged present or lacking.

Like "equity", therefore, it is open to widely differing interpretations, and it is often an umbrella term rather than anything more precise. Potentially, the term "equality" can define a very radical concept through its inherent egalitarianism. But it is also frequently used on occasions when the notion "equity" might well be more accurate, for in literal terms "equality" stands in greater contrast, even conflict, with liberal traditions that promote diversity and pluralism than the user may intend. With this in mind, the concept of "equality" may actually suggest a rather narrow approach, addressing the comparative sameness or identity of different elements rather than either absolute measures of welfare or of the justice implied by any particular arrangement, whatever the degree of equality involved.

Whether "equality" is used as a summary empirical measure/criterion or instead as implying a moral judgement depends on what is being considered. The distinction between the sub-concepts "equality of results or outcomes" and "equality of opportunity" is related strictly to this empirical/moral distinction. Some have sought to characterise the notion of equality, especially as expressed negatively (inequality), as possessing an in-built moral element through the incorporation of the idea of fairness. This bridges the concepts "equity" and "equality" by emphasising the key distinction between inequality and "mere" difference.

Equality of opportunity: a similar intangibility lies at the heart of the notion of "opportunity" which in turn defines a basic term of policy debate – equality of opportunity. The notion of opportunity encapsulates the liberal belief of offering possibilities that people may or may not actually use. An "opportunity" is thus a *genuine possibility*, a structured situation which requires the additional element of will or motivation for the opportunity to be transformed into participation or an outcome. The existence of an opportunity, and collectively of *equality* of opportunities for individuals/groups in educational, cultural, and socio-economic terms, is distinct from the actual use of or participation in them. And yet the best evidence normally provided is precisely that of participation, experience, or outcomes. Strictly speaking, such evidence is an inappropriate measure of opportunity – it provides information on profile of participation, experience, or outcomes, but not of opportunity as such. In analytical rather than political terms, then, the concept is less distinct than its widespread use would suggest.

Politically, however, the concept acquires much more salience, though it is open to differing political interpretations, from the essentially conservative to the distinctly radical. Its inherent liberalism is often taken as indicating a limited radicalism of ambition, in contrast with equality concepts defined in terms of **outcomes** (see below). In educational debates, equality of opportunity is commonly characterised as defining the laudable but limited aim of removing overt forms of institutional selection and discrimination, while leaving intact all the other more hidden mechanisms underpinning differentiation. Similarly, in socio-economic terms, the connotation in the notion "opportunity" of individual choice and motivation has commonly associated it with the belief in measuring equality by the possibility for upward social mobility, rather than by any direct equalisation of income, social recognition, or life-chances. "Equality of opportunity" has thus received bad press from the politically radical seeking more active forms of social and economic intervention and equalisation of conditions.

However, such connotations depend on where the circumscribed and questionable limits of "opportunity" are drawn. So long as more hidden forms of educational selection and/or discrimination persist, other than those embodied in formal rules and regulations, it will also be perfectly possible to query whether equality of opportunity does actually exist. The question is then: Are educational opportunities genuinely open? Take instead the social mobility example: if it is virtually impossible for the seriously disadvantaged ever to gain positions of power and privilege, it is by the same token difficult to maintain that any meaningful equality of opportunity really exists. This is a logical conclusion without any recourse to hard forms of egalitarianism. In other words, whether "equality of opportunity" defines a limited or a more radical concept essentially depends on what is considered evidence of equal opportunities. If equality of opportunity only really exists when the line-up at the start of the race is genuinely at the same spot, with no advantage enjoyed by some over others, the concept then takes on a truly radical ambition.

The distinction has a practical significance, not only theoretical purpose. If, for instance, a particular commonly-followed educational track – say in vocational education – is a dead-end option, the political importance of the concept of equality of opportunity would be small indeed if it were argued that equality of this sort exists for all, including those pupils going no-where, simply because access to the more prestigious, academic tracks is in principle open to all. For those on the dead-end track to hear they enjoy equality of opportunity with those leaving them rapidly behind is to invite derision. The promotion of equality of opportunity might be taken to imply the abolition of the low prestige tracks altogether, seeking equality through reducing the range of different opportunities available while maintening only those that already enjoy standing, a common course of policy action followed over the years in the name of equality. But the accomodation of new students in the prestigious streams may only serve to introduce new forms of differentiation and may amount to little more than a displacement of the problem. A different, and in some respects more radical, step might be to follow the opposite course: to maintain or even extend the existing range of oportunities but to take rigorous steps to ensure that all tracks are much more genuinely equal, both in terms of the quality of the learning experiences they offer and in terms of the socio-economic possibilities opened up by each. That in turn would call for a substantial redistribution of resources in order to even matters up. To pursue this to its logical conclusion may well define a very radical concept of equality indeed, perhaps well beyond that of "equality of results".

Equality of outcomes or results: Proposed as a more demanding interpretation of educational equality in order to move beyond the mere removal of selection or discrimination that "opportunity" may imply. It may be easier to address *in*equality than equality of outcomes, which at least moves beyond the overly demanding dictum of *uniformity* of outcomes. But problems remain. Since unequal outcomes are invariably found in any normal educational setting, and since few would advocate total equality or uniformity, overcoming "inequality of outcomes" can rapidly engender the impossible pessimism of finding fault with everything, with nothing to suggest constructively as an alternative. It provides little guidance as to when one set of unequal outcomes is more acceptable than another. As such, it may be far less useful in policy discourse than its prominence would suggest.

Its value lies precisely *in association with* its close conceptual relative, equality of opportunity. Emphasizing outcomes may be considered a necessary complement to the more limited interpretations of "equality of opportunity" which define it purely in terms of the removal of formal barriers of access. Oddly, the "outcomes" orientation is shared by the most radical sides of the educational right and left: calling for proof of progress to take the form of measurable results. This is seen as preferable to the imprecision of resting satisfied with impressive but intangible goals or to deny that educational outcomes can be accurately measured at all, as many progressives have sought to do.

A different type of problem that arises with the "equality of outcomes" orientation is the same as noted above: greater equality may be achieved but may co-exist with low absolute levels of welfare or of educational attainment. It remains a relative concept and as such needs additional considerations concerning the *value* of what is being considered equal. It is a questionable leap forward if pupils and students gain ground but to a lower common denominator. The aim must surely be, in the words of the 1990 Ministerial, to seek "high quality education and training for all."

Equity: frequently used as a synonym for "equality", and, in practical terms, the two raise many very similar concerns. "Equity" can be viewed as a more open, less demanding concept than "equality", and hence a more neutral, even politically acceptable, term in an era when progressive and egalitarian ideologies have lost considerable ground against more *laissez-faire* and market-oriented ones. In this sense, "equity" might be characterised as "softer" and more elastic in interpretation than "equality".

Yet its literal meanings – moral justice of which laws are an imperfect expression; the spirit of justice to guide practical action and interpretation, fairness – might equally be seen as defining a very radical concept indeed; one which extends well beyond the assessment of sameness and difference (integral to equality) to embrace judgements about the overall achievement of justice, taking into account all that is relevant to that assessment. It is a concept founded on the comparison of the imperfections of worldly arrangements against the principles that should guide and improve them. Understood this way, it is no soft concept at all. Much depends, then, on the interpretation and contents given to the notion of "equity" in practice; frequently it is used as a catch-all label rather than in any more precise way. Its political radicalism depends on the substantive interpretation of fairness and justice that lies behind it.

Ethnicity, minorities, cultural groups: Matters of language and cultural expression are often priorities for the communities themselves but these aims may relate only marginally to improving their socio-economic situation or their levels of educational achievement defined in general academic terms. Issues of political and cultural empowerment, migration policies and immigration laws, protection against racial discrimination are all intimately entwined with education policy and practice. The language of "racism" may sound extreme for mainstream policy formulation but the ordinary teacher, parent, student, or community worker knows that to ignore it is to ignore a vital part of the whole picture. Nationalism is a potent human and social driving force, often with negative consequences.

Complex questions are thus raised when considering how multicultural education systems are and should be, as well as the forms this should take. Should equal access policies be geared to opening up the *same* opportunities for all, or is instead diversity and plurality of provision the guiding model? Even from this selection of issues, it illustrates that the concepts in play are not those exclusively of disadvantage or equal access or marginality or cultural freedom or class. All are relevant.

Gender: this dimension has come right to the fore across the different OECD cultures and countries. Like the other clusters of population and group concerns, a wide variety of different aims and agendas include gender issues. And again, the language and concepts of "equity", "equality", "disadvantage", and "marginalisation" are more relevant to certain of these than they are to others. A basic question recurs as to whether or not the guiding model for reform is equal access to the same offerings or instead to create a plurality of experiences, some of which might be for men and some for women (earlier generations of reformers were convinced of the maxim that "separate cannot be equal"; today new questions are raised).

If "gender" rather than "women's issues" defines the purview, then male problems and disadvantages are as relevant as female ones, as and where these occur, just as changes to gender relations will crucially address both males and females for their success. Clarity is needed on how far the major changes in levels and, to a lesser degree, patterns of female participation in later years of education are viewed as important progress or else dismissed as negligible beside the ideals sought. In deciding, it is necessary to avoid the same pitfalls that met many of the 1960s and 1970s hopes for far-reaching change to social, economic, and cultural structures through the limited tools of educational reform. Education is no more a panacea for reforming the gamut of gender relations than it is to equalise incomes. But it is also clear that very deep and particular disadvantages exist for many women.

Geography and community: many of the geographical and community differences regarding education are examples of differences along other dimensions: such as poor working class or minority communities suffering compound problems, or a depopulated region characterised by declining numbers of young people, devoid of social and educational vitality. There are, however, considerations that are purely geographical, raising issues of access in their most literal form. These arise, for example, in ensuring equality of educational opportunities for geographical communities remote from centres of learning. And obvious though it is to state, educational, social, and economic phenomena all have a geographical location. Many of the policies to address them are also defined geographically, whether regional development or inner city programmes or those more educationally defined in terms of educational priority areas or zones.

Inequality/difference: the distinction can be drawn between a "difference" – which in educational terms may be a difference of experience, attainment, resources made available, or outcome – and an "inequality". Some have identified this as residing entirely in the qualification to a given difference that it is *unfair*. It then ceases to be a mere difference with neutral consequences and instead becomes more properly described instead by the more politically and morally charged term.

Marginalisation and exclusion: to observe the patterns of educational participation and attainment in order to improve access to life-chances automatically leads to the concern of the forms of, and mechanisms to overcome, socio-economic disadvantage. This is increasingly expressed in terms of "marginalisation" and even "exclusion".

As the terms suggest, their meaning refers to lack of full access to or participation in different aspects of life, whether social, economic, cultural, communal, or political. Individuals or groups are thus identified as marginal to or excluded from a more complete degree of participation of society. These terms may be used generally and loosely to refer to the disadvantaged, or they can have more precise connotations. Seeking to overcome "marginalisation" requires clarity on the causes and results of living outside mainstream life. There is an obvious difference between "marginalisation" as defined in socio-economic terms, where those involved would choose to be more *integrated* if they could, and when if it refers to those who live beyond conventional structures out of choice. There is less ambiguity in the notion "exclusion" than there is in "marginality", exclusion meaning those literally denied access to whatever benefits or participation in question.

Its conceptual cousin is *discrimination*, which implies differential treatment resulting in some form of exclusion which has no moral justification in terms of reasonable social selection or pluralistic diversity.

The increasing attention such terms have received can be related to the developments outlined in Chapter 2. The perspectives implied are those of identifying barriers and disjunctures – between the rich, the poor, and the very poor; the long-term unemployed and those actively in the labour market; different racial and ethnic communities – rather than to visualise society as a series of continuous and seamless webs. The notion "excluded" is much more definitive and pessimistic of the social opportunities available to those in question than the terminology of the "poor" or even the "disadvantaged". It returns to the trends outlined in the report: economic growth co-existing with the permanent phenomenon of unemployment; rising affluence for some alongside stubborn poverty for others; the sheer complexity of and rapid change in modern social organisation rendering full participation increasingly problematic for many. There is growing concern about *social polarisation*.

"Marginalisation" and "exclusion" incorporate a broader conceptualisation of life-chances than the usual indicators of income and occupation, including such

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fundamentals as political participation and cultural freedom. But they are terms open to differing concrete interpretations: to overcome marginalisation may even refer to directly contradictory ends. It may cover the illiberal aim of obliterating social and cultural differences that are distinct from mainstream mores, in contrast with the interpretation that calls for greater recognition to minority and non-mainstream viewpoints and cultures. If overcoming marginalisation means enhancing recognition of diverse cultures in mainstream society, then an active role for education can certainly be envisaged. If participation in education means to participate *de facto* in other fields, through which exclusion is overcome, there then is a clear role for education. But insofar as there is serious concern for the seriously disadvantaged, the power of education to affect greater involvement might prove to be very limited, unless it is organised very differently from existing forms. Just as education by itself is no solution to poverty, so is it likely to prove a relatively weak mechanism for altering the structures of marginalisation and exclusion whose main roots lie elsewhere.

Participation: "Participation" might refer to all types of involvement: economic, social, political, cultural, in community as well as in educational terms. It is a concept which has varying degrees; from full participation to partial and more marginal involvement. Like so many of the other terms in this glossary, it is one that allows for a wide range of interpretations. But it is also a most appropriate concept to apply to education and training and their relations with the wider world. For it points towards and embodies the democratic notions of involvement and empowerment of the individual and citizen.

Populations, targets, and groups: a different angle by which to view all the terms and concepts included in this glossary is to start with particular target populations, and then to examine how they fare in terms of equity, equality, disadvantage, access, exclusion and participation. It defines approaches where conflicts abound and political sensitivities over language and terminology are acute. For example, what are the appropriate concepts with which to address issues of gender, ethnicity, or age, and how do these concepts relate to each other? When is the language of "groups" appropriate and when is it insensitive or simply wrong? However these points are answered, it is important to recognise that there is an infinite number of overlapping ways of dividing and categorising the total population. Which of these are central to political debate is a matter strongly influenced by historical ebbs and flows. For many questions, it is the *combination* of these different dimensions – class, ethnicity, and gender, for example – that is most pertinent.

Socio-economic situation, social class: whatever the particular terminology applied, socio-economic considerations are, arguably, the most important. A great deal (though not all) of the concern about other targets for educational policies and programmes – such as poor communities or regions, the prospects of ethnic minorities, gender issues – ultimately arise because of the inequitable, unequal, or disadvantageous access to socio-economic benefits. It has become unfashionable in some quarters to address these matters through the language of social class. At the same time, those on the left anguish over questions about the degree to which any structured inequalities exist other than those based on social class. Wherever the different ideological debates end up, it is clear that socio-economic concerns lie at the core of many issues on equity, access, and participation in education and training, whether addressing causes or consequences.

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OECD PUBLICATIONS, 2, rue André-Pascal, 75775 PARIS CEDEX 16
PRINTED IN FRANCE
(91 97 04 1 P) ISBN 92-64-15478-7 – No. 49401 1997

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